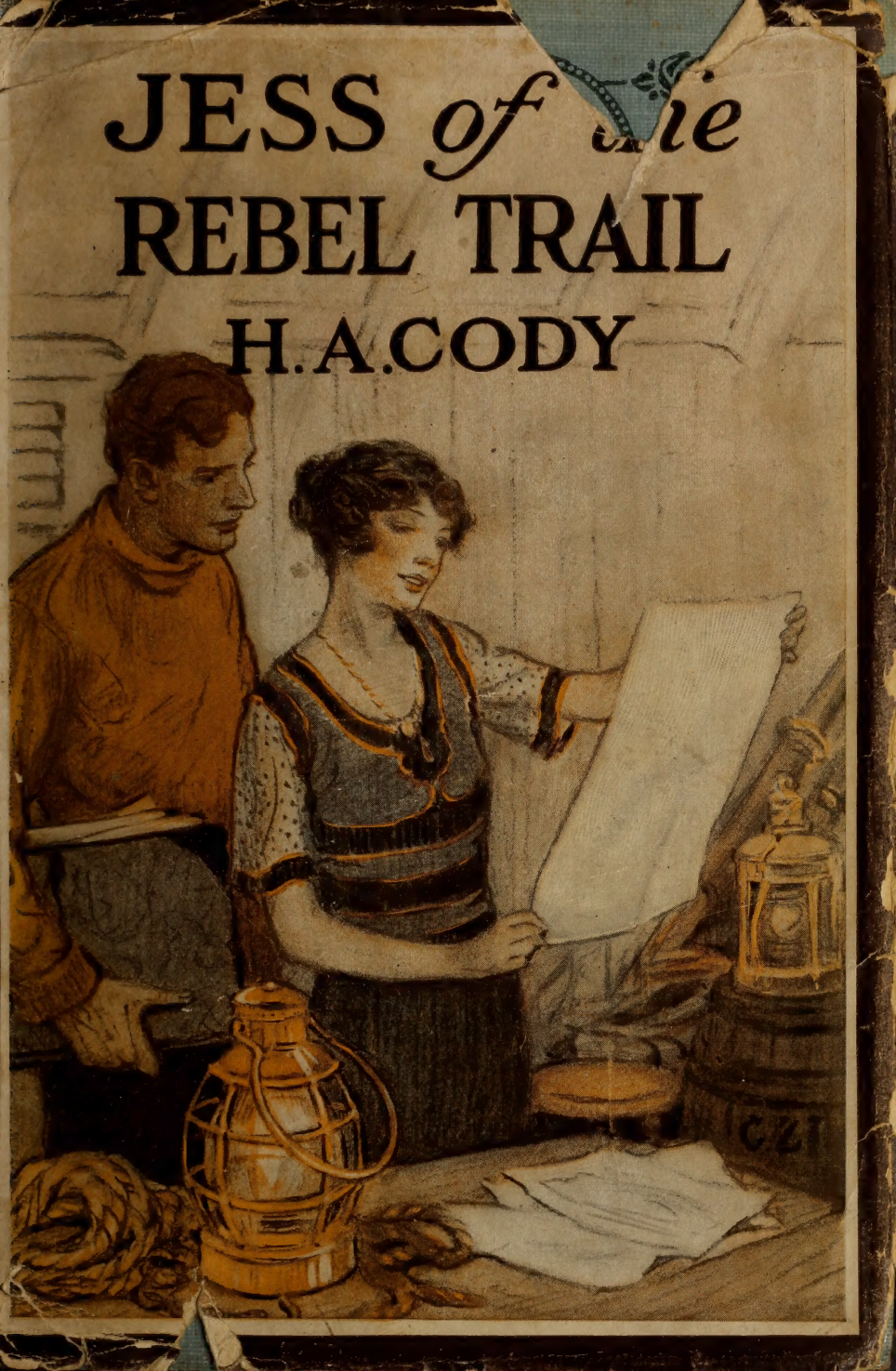
JESS of the REBEL TRAIL

H. A. CODY



RB186706

VO

of the

TORONTO

sit

llege

WIANCKO BROS.
Booksellers & Stationers
BLOOR & YONGE

JESS OF THE REBEL TRAIL

H. A. CODY

BY H. A. CODY

JESS OF THE REBEL TRAIL
GLEN OF THE HIGH NORTH
THE TOUCH OF ABNER
THE UNKNOWN WRESTLER
UNDER SEALED ORDERS
IF ANY MAN SIN
THE CHIEF OF THE RANGES
THE FOURTH WATCH
THE LONG PATROL
ROD OF THE LONE PATROL
THE FRONTIERSMAN

JESS OF THE REBEL TRAIL

BY

H. A. CODY

AUTHOR OF "THE FRONTIERSMAN," "THE LONG PATROL," "THE CHIEF OF THE RANGES," "THE FOURTH WATCH," "GLEN OF THE HIGH NORTH," ETC.

McCLELLAND AND STEWART
PUBLISHERS : : TORONTO

COPYRIGHT, 1921,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To

MY UNCLE AND NAMESAKE

HIRAM CODY

Long Since Passed Within the Vail

This Book is Dedicated

In Grateful and Loving Remembrance

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	The Hold-Up	11
II	Rebellion	20
III	The "Eb an' Flo"	27
IV	Under Cover	36
V	Captain Samuel Goes Shopping	45
VI	Eben Makes a Discovery	52
VII	Giving Martha the Go-by	61
VIII	What the Cow Did	70
IX	Martha Takes a Hand	80
X	Unwelcome Visitors	90
XI	In Peril of Death	97
XII	Cornered	108
XIII	A Tricky Passenger	119
XIV	Another Victim	128
XV	Two Women's Troubles	140
XVI	More Than a Dream	148
XVII	Captain Sam'l Goes Home	157
XVIII	Hard Luck	165
XIX	The Captain Gives Advice	173
XX	Mrs. Grimsby's Mission	184
XXI	Eben Comes Ashore	193
XXII	On the Rebel Trail	203
XXIII	Straight Talk	212

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXIV	Eben Attends to Grimsby	220
XXV	The Forest Fire	228
XXVI	In the Ring of Death	234
XXVII	In the Nick of Time	243
XXVIII	In Urgent Need	252
XXIX	Confession	263
XXX	Joy at Eventide	271

JESS OF THE REBEL TRAIL

"I have no other but a woman's reason;
I think him so, because I think him so."

SHAKESPEARE

"When all other rights are taken away,
the right of rebellion is made perfect."

THOMAS PAINE

"Women are never stronger than when they
arm themselves with their weakness."

MADAME DU DEFFAND

JESS OF THE REBEL TRAIL

CHAPTER I

THE HOLD-UP

THE glowing coals in the spacious grate seemed to fascinate the woman as she sat huddled in a big luxurious chair. The book she had been reading was lying open and unheeded on her lap. Her surroundings were by no means in keeping with her dejected manner. The room was cosy and lavishly furnished, while the shaded electric reading-lamp cast its gentle radiance upon the woman's white hair and soft evening-gown. It was a rough night, and the wind howling outside beat furiously against the closely-blinded windows.

It was a night such as this, nearly twenty years before, of which the woman was thinking. She was once again in a room in a private hospital, lying weak and helpless from the ordeal through which she had passed. It all came back to her now with a stinging intensity, causing her white hands to clench hard, and her eyes to widen with a nameless fear.

A maid entered and announced a visitor.

"I can't see anyone to-night," the woman before the fire declared, without even turning her head.

"But——" the maid began.

"That is all, Maggie. You need not say anything more. I wish to be left entirely alone."

The maid hesitated a few seconds before obeying the imperious command. Then she slowly turned, and had almost reached the door when it was suddenly pushed open and a man entered. Without a word, he stepped past her and glided across the room toward the fire. His unexpected appearance startled the woman crouching there. She straightened quickly up and stared at the intruder in amazement.

"Who are you?" she demanded. "How dare you come here? Maggie, put this man out."

But Maggie had disappeared, so the woman was left to face the man alone.

"I won't harm you, madame," he smilingly informed her, as he moved closer to the fire and stretched out his hands. "I'm as harmless as a kitten."

"Keep back," the woman ordered. "Don't come so close."

"Oh, I'm all right. Don't you worry about me." Again the man smiled as he rubbed his hands together.

"I wasn't worrying about you," the woman retorted. "I would like to see you burn yourself for your impudence."

Her fear had now vanished, and she was angry. She carefully noted the man's slight figure, and threadbare clothes. But his face was what attracted her most of all. It was somewhat chubby, and when the mouth was expanded by the almost incessant smile the cheeks were wrinkled like corrugated iron. His head was bald, save for a few tufts of hair above the ears. His bulging eyes twinkled with good humour, causing an observer to feel that their owner was well satisfied with himself and the entire world.

"Who are you?" the woman again demanded. "How dare you come uninvited into my room?"

The man straightened himself up, and standing with his back to the fire brought forth a package of cigarettes, selected one, and deliberately lighted it.

"You don't mind if I have a smoke, do you?" he asked. "It's good for the nerves."

"Indeed I do," the woman replied. "I hate smoking. I never allow it in this room."

"I'm sorry, madame, but you'll soon forget all about it. I have come to see you to-night on very important business, and when I tell you what it is you won't think any more about the smoke."

"Important business! With me? Why, I never saw you before, and I have not the slightest idea who you are. What do you want, anyway?"

"Yes, it's important business, as I have just said, and when I learned that you would see no one to-night I was compelled to force myself upon your presence."

"How did you know that I would see no one to-night? Were you listening at the door?"

"Madame, when you get to know me better you will learn that I am able to read people's thoughts, though doors may intervene. Words are unnecessary to me. I know all."

The man blew a cloud of smoke into the air, and smiled. "Yes," he continued, "I even read your thoughts to-night as you sat before this fire."

"You did!" The woman's eyes grew wide with fear and amazement. "Who are you, anyway?"

"I am merely a stand-between; that has been my business for years."

"A stand-between?"

"Yes, I stand between people and ignorance. I supply them with mental food, books of the first-water. They all know me, and look upon me as a public benefactor."

"So you are a book-agent, then? And you want to

sell me some books, I suppose? Is that your business here to-night?"

The man waved his hand haughtily, and flicked the ashes from his cigarette into the fire.

"No, madame, it is not. Business is somewhat dull these days, I must confess. People are not as anxious as formerly for pure literature. There are too many counter attractions. This being so, I find it is becoming more difficult to stand between my family and poverty. Therefore, I am here to-night."

"So you want me to give you some money; is that it?"

"Ah, now I see you understand," and the man's face beamed. "But remember, I come not as a beggar, neither as a suppliant, but merely to receive payment for a favor."

"Payment for a favor!" the woman exclaimed. "What do you mean? I owe you nothing. I never saw you before. What favor?"

"The favor of silence. I know what you were thinking about to-night as you sat here. Your thoughts were in the past, to another night such as this. You were in a private hospital, and——"

He was interrupted by a startled cry from the woman. She was sitting bolt upright, her hands gripping hard the arms of the chair, and her face ghastly white.

"W-what do you know?" she gasped.

"Calm yourself, madame. Although I know all, you have no need to fear."

For a few seconds the woman stared at the man before her. Then she gave an hysterical laugh and sank back in her chair. What did this stranger know? she wondered. Perhaps nothing, and she had made a fool of herself by showing her agitation.

"My nerves are somewhat shaken to-night," she confessed. "I have not been well of late, so your sudden appearance and strange words have rather unsettled

me. What do you mean by referring to another night such as this, and to a private hospital? What have they to do with me?"

"A great deal, I should say, madame. If you doubt my knowledge, it is only necessary to mention the name of Hettie Rawlins, now my wife, Mrs. Gabriel Grimsby."

"Hettie Rawlins!" the woman's face showed her perplexity.

"Yes, Hettie Rawlins, the girl who exchanged the babies. Don't you remember her?"

But the woman did not reply. She sat staring at the man before her.

"There is no doubt now about my knowledge is there?" the stranger asked with a smile.

"Heavens, no!" the unhappy woman groaned. "And to think that after all these years I should be thus confronted in my own house, and by a complete stranger. And so your wife told you all?"

"Everything, although she kept the secret for a long time. She told me how you bribed her to exchange your little baby boy for a girl which was born in the hospital on the same day, and the amount you gave the baby's mother for making the exchange."

"Stop, stop," the woman pleaded. "You will kill me."

"But you know it all, madame. You were thinking about it to-night, were you not?"

"I was, I was," and the woman buried her face in her hands.

Presently she lifted her head.

"Where is the boy?" she asked in a hoarse whisper. "Is he alive?"

"And so you are interested in him, madame?"

"Interested? Why, he is with me night and day. Though he must be a young man now, yet I always see him as the little babe I held to my breast. If you know

where he is, tell me. I must see him somehow, though he must never know who I am."

"What about the girl, your daughter?" the man questioned. "She must be a comfort to you now, and well takes the place of—of your son."

"Nothing can ever take his place," the woman vehemently declared. I thought so once, fool that I was. But I know better now when it is too late. Where is he? For God's sake, tell me!"

"And you have had no word from him?" the man asked.

"Nothing. I do not even know the woman's name who took him. I thought I would never want to know."

"Then, madame, it is better for you to remain in ignorance. It would do you no good now to learn anything about him. I, at any rate, shall not enlighten you."

"You won't?"

"No, not now."

"Then why have you come here to-night to inflict this torture upon me? What good can it do to increase the agony of my tormented soul? Surely I have endured enough already."

"I come, madame, merely as a stand-between. Business with me has been dull of late, as I have just told you. Therefore, when one door closes another opens. I am not a man to let a good opportunity of earning a few honest dollars slip. I know your story, and, accordingly, am here to receive payment."

"Payment! For what?" the woman asked in amazement.

"For silence. I suppose you don't want this matter known?"

"Good heavens, no! What would my husband and daughter think? Why, I could never face the world again."

"Very well, madame. I am pleased to know that you realise the situation," and the man smiled blandly upon his victim. He was succeeding much better than he had expected. "I shall see that this matter is kept a profound secret."

"Oh, will you?" and the woman looked her relief.

"Indeed I will, providing you make it worth while. I am always open for business."

The woman looked keenly at the man.

"Do I understand that you want to be paid for keeping silent?" she at length found voice to ask.

"Certainly. That's what I'm here for. Business is business, remember, and if I cannot make a living at my regular profession, I must turn to the next best thing that offers."

"But this is a hold-up. Are you not afraid to do such a thing?"

"Afraid! Of what?"

The sudden flush that mantled the woman's face plainly showed that she understood. The man noted it, and smiled.

"You realise the situation, madame, I see. That is very fortunate. I have nothing to fear, as you would do almost anything rather than let your secret be known."

"But suppose I do not accede to your demand, what then?"

"That would remain for you to find out, madame. Are you willing to run the risk?"

"Heavens, no! It must not be. What is your price? Tell me quick, and let us get through with this painful interview."

"Willingly, madame. I am as anxious to get through as you are. My price is very moderate, considering the favor I am bestowing upon you. I want five hundred dollars."

"Five hundred dollars!" The woman gasped as she stared at her visitor. "Why, you are a scoundrel, and nothing less."

Grimsby smiled, and rubbed his hands. He felt sure of his quarry, and it mattered little to him what he was called. It was all in the way of business, so he told himself. Then he picked up his hat from the floor where he had deposited it, and made as though he was about to leave.

"Very well, then," he casually remarked. "If you think it is too much I am sorry. Next week, perhaps, you will consider it very cheap, and would be willing to give far more. But it may be too late then. However, if you are unwilling to meet my moderate demand, it is no use for me to remain longer."

He started to leave the fire-place, but the woman detained him.

"Don't go just yet," she ordered. "I realise that I must give you something. But isn't your price exorbitant?"

"It might be for some, but not for you, Mrs. Randall. I understand that you are one of the largest tax-payers in this city, and in your own name at that. Why, I am astonished at myself for my moderation in asking for so little from such a rich woman. I might have made it a thousand at least."

For a few minutes the woman remained in deep thought. Grimsby never took his eyes from her face. He was quite elated with himself, for he felt sure of success.

At length the woman gave a weary sigh, rose slowly from her chair, and crossing the room, sat down before a handsome writing-table. When she at last came back to the fire-place she was holding a cheque in her hand. Eagerly the man reached out to receive it. But the woman waved him back.

"Just a minute," she told him. "Before I give you this I want you to promise upon your word of honour that you will never ask me for any more money."

"I promise, madame," Grimsby replied, bowing, and placing his right hand upon his heart in a dramatic manner. "I shall make myself as scarce as I always do when my creditors are after me. What more can I say?"

"And you will never breathe a word of this to anyone?"

"Trust me to keep the secret, madame. I shall not even tell my wife."

The woman was about to say something more, but a startled look came into her eyes, as she turned apprehensively toward the door. Nervously she thrust the cheque into the man's hand.

"Here, take this," she ordered, "and leave the house at once. Somebody is coming."

Without a word Grimsby seized his hat, sped across the room, opened the door and disappeared. Trembling violently, the woman sank down in the chair and buried her face in her hands, a veritable picture of abject misery and despair.

CHAPTER II

REBELLION

THE man had been gone but a few minutes when the door was again opened and a girl entered. She was a vision fair to behold as she paused for an instant while her eyes rested upon the woman crouched before the fire. She evidently had just come in out of the night, for she wore her out-of-door cloak, and her hair was somewhat tossed by the violence of the wind. The rich colour of her cheeks betokened the healthy exercise of one who had walked some distance. An expression of anxiety came into her dark-brown eyes as she crossed the room, and bent over the woman in the chair.

"Mother, mother, what is the matter?" she demanded. "Are you ill?"

"Oh, it's you, Jess, is it?" the woman languidly asked as she lifted her head. "I thought it was Maggie. I was not expecting you so soon. What brought you home so early?"

"It must have been my guiding angel," the girl smilingly replied. "So you were lonely without me? Was that the trouble?"

"Yes, I suppose that had something to do with it. But I am not feeling well to-night. This room seems very oppressive."

"You are too warm," and the girl glanced down at the fire. Her eyes at once rested upon the stub of the cigarette lying upon the grate where Grimsby had thrown it. She also smelled the smoke of tobacco and

instantly surmised that something out of the ordinary had happened to agitate her usually self-possessed mother.

"Somebody has been here annoying you," she cried, turning impulsively to the woman. "Was it Tom asking for more money?"

Again the woman bowed her head, and made no immediate answer. Her thoughts were active, and she was glad of any excuse.

"How did you know he was here?" she at length asked, without looking up.

"I met a man hurrying from the door as I came in. It was too dark to see who he was, and he did not seem to notice me at all. Tom knows my opinion of him, and so he is not anxious to meet me. I did not think of Tom, though, until I found you so upset. And he was smoking too, for there is the stub of his cigarette. Why can't he leave you alone?"

"He never will, Jess. He is just like Will and Dick. They are always bothering me about money, as if I haven't been giving to them for years. They are just like helpless children."

"Worse, mother. They are three useless men. It is well that I am a girl, for I might be tempted to follow their miserable example. Are you not glad that you have only three sons instead of four?"

Receiving no reply, the girl took off her hat, laid aside her wraps, and rang for the maid. Then she drew up a chair and sat down by her mother's side.

"My, this fire is pleasant," she remarked, as she leaned back and gazed into the glowing coals. "I am glad after all that I came home."

"Why didn't Mr. Donaster come in, Jess? I have not seen him for some time."

"Neither have I, mother." The girl's face flushed, and there was a challenge in her voice.

"You haven't! Why, I thought you were with him to-night."

"Indeed I was not. You know as well as I do that I wish to have nothing to do with that man. I have told you so over and over again."

This sudden outburst aroused the woman from her crouching position. She sat upright, and the expression in her eyes told how deeply she was offended.

"Now, look here, Jess," she began, "I want no more of this nonsense. I have made up my mind that you are to marry Mr. Donaster, and marry him you shall."

"Would you force me to marry such a man as that?" the girl asked.

"And why not?"

"Because I detest him, and hate the very sight of him."

"But he is of a fine family, and his father, Lord Donaster, is immensely rich. Burton is his only son, and he will inherit the estate, so you will be Lady Donaster. It is very seldom a girl meets with such an opportunity in this province."

The girl gave her head a slight toss, and her face flushed more than ever.

"I can hardly believe it possible that you are willing to barter your only daughter for such baubles," she indignantly replied. "It is unnatural."

The presence of the maid with tea and toast interrupted the conversation for a few minutes. Jess poured the tea for her mother, but took none herself.

"Are you not going to have any tea?" her mother asked.

"No, I do not care for any now, as I had some at Mrs. Merton's."

"So that's where you were, eh? Why didn't you go to the play?"

"I didn't want to. I preferred to spend a quiet hour

or two with Mrs. Merton. She is a woman who does things of some importance instead of spending her time upon a giddy butterfly-life. She is a regular tonic, and always inspires me to be up and doing."

"You are silly, Jess." Her mother was visibly annoyed. "Why should you talk about being up and doing? Haven't you everything that you desire, with the prospect of a brilliant career before you?"

"What career?"

"As Lady Donaster, of course. To what else should I refer?"

"And you call that a career, mother? Slavery is the right word to use. I wish to be of some benefit to the world and not to drift through life like a wretched puppet."

"If this is what you have learned from Mrs. Merton you must not go there any more. I have always known that she held peculiar views, but I had no idea that she would try to unsettle the minds of young girls."

"But I am not a young girl, remember, mother. I am nearly twenty now, and should be able to think somewhat for myself. Mrs. Merton's views were mine even before I met her. For several years I have been dissatisfied with a life that held out little or no promise of anything definite. I want to make my own way in the world."

"But you have not been trained for that, so what can you expect to do?"

"I know it only too well, mother," was the bitter reply. "You brought me up to shine in society and nothing else. But I have youth on my side, with an abundance of health and strength, so I am not afraid."

"This is all nonsense, Jess. You are talking like an irresponsible child. You know not what it means to earn your own living. And think what a disgrace it would be to have our only daughter working as a com-

mon girl. Imagine Jess Randall as a clerk in a dry-goods store or in an office. The idea is preposterous! You must give it up at once."

"I can't see anything disgraceful about it, mother. I am sure it is far better to earn one's own living than to be always depending upon others. But I shall not disgrace you, so you need not worry about that."

"What do you intend to do?"

"I have several things in view, and I know that daddy will provide me with money to carry them out."

"He will do nothing of the sort. His mind is as fully made up as mine that you are to marry Mr. Donaster. Don't you think that we are more capable of judging for your good than you?"

"I have very serious doubts about that. I know you will consider me ungrateful for saying so, but you ask me, and so I am forced to tell the truth."

"Well, I declare!" and Mrs. Randall looked her astonishment. "What has come over you, Jess? I never knew you to talk like this before. You seem to have lost all confidence in your parents' judgment."

"Not all, mother. But I know how you interfered with the boys' welfare, and look how they have turned out. There was a time when they wished to go to work and win their own way in the world. But you would not let them, and spoiled their lives by giving them too much money to spend, and telling them that it was not dignified to work. And look what they are now; helpless to do anything for themselves, and a burden to you. Daddy agreed with everything you said, and see what has happened. You made a sad mistake with them, and I am determined that it shall not be so with me."

The girl was trembling violently as she finished, and she had risen to her feet. The colour had fled from her face, and her hands were firmly clasped before her. Her mother also rose, and confronted her daughter.

"You are a rebellious and an ungrateful girl," she charged. "To think of your saying such things after all we have done for you. What do you mean?"

"Just what I have said, as you will find out. It is about time for me to assert myself when you are determined to shackle me to a creature I detest."

"Mr. Donaster is a gentleman, and the son of a gentleman, so you must not refer to him in such an offensive manner. I absolutely forbid it."

"He may be a gentleman according to the standard of some, but not according to mine. He is nothing but an unbearable cad, and with no more character than a jelly-fish. And to think of my having to put up with a thing like that for the rest of my life. Why, I would rather be dead."

"It would be almost a relief to me if you were," and Mrs. Randall gave a deep sigh of despair. "A daughter as wilful as you will only bring disgrace upon her parents."

"I am surprised at your saying such a thing," the girl replied. "One would almost imagine you are not my mother at all, you are so heartless. Would a real mother be willing to sacrifice her only daughter?"

Mrs. Randall gave a sudden start, and looked keenly into the eyes of the girl standing so defiantly before her. "Does she suspect anything?" she asked herself. Then she gave a nervous laugh, and resumed her seat.

"Leave me alone now," she ordered. "I see it is no use talking to you any more to-night, you are so unreasonable and headstrong. Your father will have to take you in hand. He will soon knock this nonsense out of your head. He is determined that you shall marry Mr. Donaster, and you might as well make up your mind to that first as last."

"Mother, I shall go now. But let me tell you, as I

shall tell daddy, that nothing on earth can make me marry the man I do not love."

"Tut, tut. Love has nothing to do with marriages these days," Mrs. Randall impatiently replied. "There is no such a thing as love in marriage; it is merely a matter of convenience."

"If I believed that, I should never marry, mother."

"And don't you?"

"Indeed I do not."

"What do you know about love?"

"I know, perhaps, more than you think." The girl's face was now deeply flushed, and this her mother noted.

"Jess, what is the meaning of this? Is there someone else in whom you are interested besides Mr. Donaster? Tell me. I must know the truth at once. It is no use trying to conceal it from me."

The girl's eyes dropped, and she turned her face partly away to hide her emotion.

"In Mr. Donaster I am not even interested," she confessed. "But in another, I am more than interested, for I love him with my whole heart. There, you now know the truth, and so you can say and do what you like. Good night."

Without another word, the girl turned and hurried out of the room, leaving her mother speechless with anger and amazement.

CHAPTER III

THE "EB AN' FLO"

JUST how it happened Samuel Tobin, owner and captain of the "Eb and Flo," was never able to explain with any degree of clearness. He knew that he was on his knees, scrubbing the floor of the little cabin and humming

> "Here I'll raise my Ebenezer,
> Hither by Thy grace I'll come,"

when a form darkened the narrow doorway overhead. Then followed a scream of fright, and before he had hardly time to look around she was lying by his side, a confused heap of silk, lace, and flowing dark-brown hair.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" Samuel exclaimed, scrambling to his feet. "What in time——?"

A merry laugh interrupted him, as the girl sprang lightly to her feet, arranged her disordered dress, and brushed back her hair.

"My! that was a surprise," she remarked, glancing at the steps down which she had just tumbled. "I didn't know they were there."

"Ye didn't, eh?" and Samuel looked curiously at his unexpected visitor. "Thought ye was walkin' into a parlour, I s'pose."

"Do you own this boat?" the girl suddenly and somewhat anxiously asked.

"Well, I thought I did, Miss, until you arrived, but

now I ain't quite sartin. I feel somethin' like Bill Slocum said he did when a bear dropped in on him one night when he was campin' out on his back medder."

"What did he do?"

"Oh, Bill, jist lit out an' left the bear in charge, the same as any sensible man would do."

"I hope you do not compare me to a bear," and the girl smiled.

"No, I wouldn't like to do that, Miss. But ye must have had some mighty good reason fer comin' down them steps the way ye did. It's a wonder to me yer neck wasn't broken."

"I have a good reason," was the emphatic reply. "I am running away."

"Runnin' away!" Samuel's eyes opened wide in amazement, and he stared hard at the girl. He would have been less than human if his pulse had not quickened, and his heart beat faster, for she was truly possessed of more than ordinary beauty and grace of figure. Her large dark expressive eyes betrayed anxiety, and her cheeks were flushed. Once she gave a slight start and glanced nervously up the steps as if expecting to see someone following her.

"Yes, I am running away," she repeated, "and I want you to hide me on this boat."

"Runnin' away, an' want me to hide ye!" Samuel ran his fingers through his hair, a sure sign of his perplexity. "Ye ain't been stealin' or murderin' anybody, have ye?"

"No, no; it's not so bad as that. But it might be suicide, though, if you don't help me. And you will, won't you?" she pleaded, turning her eyes full upon the captain's face.

The latter made no immediate reply. He picked up his pail and set it carefully aside. He then unrolled the

turned-up sleeves of his coarse shirt, and deliberately buttoned them about his thick hairy wrists.

"Set down, Miss," he at length ordered, motioning to the only chair the cabin contained. "Thar, that's better," he said as the girl immediately obeyed. "Sorry me accommodations are so poor, but then this ain't no ocean liner. She's nuthin' but an old woodboat, an' not much of a place fer receivin' the likes of you."

"But I think it's fine," the girl replied, "and I know you will let me stay here for a while. You need a woman to look after this cabin, and I will wash and cook for you."

"Ye will!"

"Certainly. If you will only let me stay, I think you will find me quite useful."

"H'm, queer work you'd do in them dandy togs. An' besides, this craft can't afford to keep up much style. I s'pose ye'd want clean linen on the table every day, to say nuthin' of napkins, an' sich gear. No, I'm afraid ye'd prove too expensive fer the 'Eb an' Flo.' I've been cook here fer so long that I wouldn't know what to do with a woman around. Martha tried it once, but a week was enough fer her, so she got out. Said she couldn't stand me housekeepin' methods."

"Who is Martha?" the girl asked.

"Oh, she's me wife, an' runs things ashore. Her an' Flo do all right thar, but me an' Eb feel more at home on the water, with no women buttin' in."

"Is Flo your daughter?"

"Sure. An' Eb's me son. Jist the two, so I named this craft after 'em, ye see. Eb an' Flo sounds about right to my way of thinkin'. When yer boatin' on this river ye have to be allus considerin' the ebb an' flow of the tide, so the name is quite handy."

"It certainly is," and the girl smiled. "I am sure I shall like it. Where is your son now?"

"Oh, he's ashore gittin' some molasses an' other stuff from the store. He should be back soon, Miss, so I think ye'd better leave before he comes. Thar might be trouble. He's dead set aginst strange women, Eben is."

"Will you start as soon as your son returns?" the girl asked, unheeding the captain's warning.

"Start! Start where?"

"Sailing, of course."

"Not until the wind springs up. Thar's a dead calm now, an' the tide's aginst us."

"Oh, I wish it would blow a gale," and the girl looked anxiously around. "I want to get away from this place as soon as possible."

"Well, I think the best thing then fer you to do is to go ashore an' light out. Ye kin do it quicker thar than here."

"But I can't get ashore, Captain."

"Ye can't! An' why not, I'd like to know?"

"Because my boat has gone adrift. I let it go on purpose."

"Good Lord!" Samuel sat down upon a biscuit box and eyed his visitor curiously. "Say, are you crazy, or a fool, or what are ye, anyway?" he asked.

"I'm just a poor unfortunate girl, that's who I am," was the decided reply.

"An' ye ain't done nuthin' bad; nuthin' that yer ashamed of, Miss?"

"No, no," and the girl's face crimsoned. "I'm proud of what I have done," and she lifted her head haughtily, while her eyes flashed. "Any girl with the least self-respect would do the same, so there."

"That's all right, Miss, that's all right," Samuel hurriedly assured her. "I wasn't castin' any reflection upon yer character. I was only wonderin', that's all. Ye see, Flo's about your age, from what I judge, an' I wouldn't like her to be actin' this way."

"I know you wouldn't. But my case is different. Oh, I wish I could tell you all, but I can't. You will trust me, anyway, won't you, and let me stay here for a while?"

The captain sighed and looked helplessly around.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" he growled. "This is sartinly some fix an' I don't know what to do. The accommodation isn't much here fer the likes of you, though it ain't too bad fer me an' Eb. If you occupy this cabin, we'll have to camp out on deck, an' I know what Eb'll say about that. He's more'n fond of sleep, that boy is, the greatest I ever saw. Why he'd sooner sleep than eat any day, an' he likes a good soft bed at that. I had to buy a special spring an' mattress before I could git him to come with me this year. He doesn't take much to boatin', an' I have to make things as smooth as possible."

"But can't you put his cot on deck?" the girl suggested. "I am very sorry that I am giving you so much trouble, but I shall pay you well. Money is no object if you will only help me out of my trouble. I am sure you will never regret it."

"I hope not, Miss, fer I don't want to git into any fix. It wouldn't look very nice if the papers got hold of this affair. Jist imagine a big write-up about Capt. Sam'l Tobin keepin' a fine lookin' runaway gal on the 'Eb an' Flo.' Why, I'd never be able to hold up me head agin, an' I guess it 'ud about break Martha's heart, to say nuthin' about Flo. They're mighty pertic'ler about sich things, they surely are."

"This must never get into the papers," the girl declared, "for you must promise that you will keep it a dead secret, and not tell anyone, not even your own family."

"I don't see how I kin do that, Miss. I guess ye don't know Martha as well as I do. If ye did, ye wouldn't

talk about keepin' this racket a secret from me family. An' besides, thar's Eben, who'll be here in a jiffy now. How am I to explain matters to him? No, Miss, I reckon ye'd better light out while the coast is clear. I'll git the boy to take ye ashore, an' tell him that ye hit the wrong craft."

But the girl was not to be baffled in her purpose. She rose to her feet and stood before the captain. Her eyes were wide with a nameless fear, and her face showed very white where the light of the bracket-lamp fell upon it.

"Don't, don't send me away," she pleaded. "Let me stay here until you go from this place. Then you can put me ashore in the woods, or throw me overboard, I don't care which, but for the love of heaven let me stay now!"

Captain Samuel's big right hand dove suddenly into his pocket and clawed forth a clay pipe, a plug of tobacco, and a large jack-knife. He examined them carefully for a few seconds, the girl all the time watching him most intently.

"You will let me stay, won't you?" she coaxed. "Don't send me away."

"I don't see how I kin, Miss. Yer here, an' that's all thar is about it. Ye won't go of yer own accord, an' I've never yit laid hands on a woman. Now, if you was a man I'd show ye a thing or two in a jiffy, but what kin one do with a woman when she once makes up her mind?"

"Oh, thank you so much," and the girl's face brightened. "You will never regret your kindness to me. And look, I'm going to pay you well for letting me stay."

"Pay!" The captain's eyes bulged with astonishment.

"Yes, pay," and the girl smiled. "I'm a passenger, you see, so I'm going to pay my fare. There, you must

not object, for I have made up my mind, so it's no use for you to say a word. I'm going to give you fifty dollars now and more later."

The pipe fell from the captain's hand and broke in two upon the floor.

"Blame it all!" he growled, as he stood staring upon the wreck. "I wonder what's comin' over me, anyway? Guess I'm losin' me senses."

"No you're not; you are just getting them, Captain. It's better to break a pipe than a girl's heart, isn't it?"

"I s'pose so, Miss. But a pipe means a good smoke, while a woman means——"

He paused, and looked helplessly around.

"What?" The girl's eyes twinkled.

"Trouble; that's what."

"But isn't she worth it?"

"That all depends upon what an' who she is."

"Certainly. Now you are talking sense. Isn't your daughter worth all the trouble she has been to you?"

"Sure, sure; yer sartinly right thar, Miss. Flo's given me a heap of trouble, but not half as much as Eben. That boy's a caution, an' he's given me an' Martha no end of worry."

"In what way?"

The captain scratched his head in perplexity, and shifted uneasily from one foot to another.

"I kin hardly explain," he at length replied. "He don't drink, nor swear, nor do nuthin' bad. But the trouble is, he don't do nuthin', an' don't want to do nuthin' but sleep an' eat."

"Perhaps you have not brought him up right, Captain."

"Not brought him up right!" Samuel's amazement was intense. "Why, Miss, we've done nuthin' but bring that boy up. Me an' Martha have slaved fer the raisin' of Eben. We started when he was a baby to raise him

right, an' the very next Sunday after he was born didn't they sing in church—

"'Here I'll raise my Ebenezer'."

"And so you've been singing it ever since, even when scrubbing the cabin?" The girl smiled at the recollection of the suddenly discontinued tune.

"Sure, why shouldn't I? It's a great hymn, it sartinly is, an' it's inspired me many a time. It has kept before me my duty, an' if Eben doesn't amount to somethin', it won't be my fault, nor Martha's, either, fer that matter."

"Have you taken the same care with your daughter?" the girl asked.

"No, not as much," was the reluctant confession. "Gals don't need sich special care. They ginerally grow up all right, an' git along somehow. But it's different with boys. They're a problem, they sartinly are."

"And so you have given most of your attention to your son, and let your daughter grow up any way. Is that it, Captain?"

"That's about it, Miss."

"And how is your daughter getting along?"

"Fust rate. We've no trouble with her. She's a good worker, happy an' cheerful as a bird, an' does what she's told. She's a fine gal, Flo is, an' thar's no mistake about that. I wish to goodness Eben was like her."

"It seems to me, Captain, that you tried too hard to raise your son, and spoiled him. Isn't that it?"

"D'ye think so?"

"I am sure of it. You are not the only ones who have spent all their care upon their sons and let their daughters grow up as they please. I know too much about it."

"Ye do!" Samuel's eyes opened wide in wonder. "An' you only a young gal, too."

"But I am old in experience, and know what I say is true. But what is that?" A startled look leaped into her eyes. "Do you suppose it is someone after me?"

With a bound the captain sprang up the stairs. He paused for an instant, however, and glanced back.

"Don't be scared, Miss," he encouraged. "It's only Eben. He's bumped hard aginst the boat. You keep close under cover, an' I'll do what I kin with the boy."

CHAPTER IV

UNDER COVER

BY the time the captain reached the side of the boat, Eben had his small skiff tied to the deck-rail. He was standing up, a tall, gaunt, ungainly youth, freckled faced, and sandy haired. He wore a dark-brown sweater, and a pair of overalls, baggy at the knees. He did not speak as his father approached, but mechanically handed up to him a jug of molasses, and several paper parcels. He then leaped lightly upon deck, and headed for the cabin. But the captain detained him by laying a firm and heavy hand upon his shoulder.

"Keep out of thar," he ordered. "I've jist been scrubbin' an' don't want ye to dirty the place up."

The tone of his father's voice caused Eben to swing suddenly around.

"Me feet ain't dirty," he drawled. "An' s'pose they are, what's the difference? The cabin ain't no parler. Let me go; I'm most starved."

But the captain's grip increased as he yanked his son a few feet back.

"I'm in charge of this craft," he reminded, "an' what I say goes. Yer not goin' down into that cabin to-night, so jist make up yer mind to that fust as last."

The boy now stared in speechless amazement. Never before had he seen his father so agitated, nor heard him speak to him in such a manner.

"D'ye understand?" the captain asked.

"Understand what?"

"That yer not goin' down in that cabin. Isn't that what I jist said? Where are yer ears?"

A sullen look leaped into the boy's eyes, and with an effort he shook himself free from his father's grasp.

"D'ye mean it?" he growled.

"Sartinly I mean it. An' what's more, I don't want ye to ask any fool questions. We'll eat an' sleep on deck to-night, up forrad. I'll bring the grub an' clothes from the cabin, but you stay out."

Eben was about to reply in an angry manner, when the form of his countenance instantly changed, and a peculiar expression, half-humorous, appeared in his eyes. He stood looking at his father for a few seconds in an absent-minded manner. Then, without a word, he picked up the jug of molasses and strode up forward. The captain gazed after him in astonishment, greatly wondering what had come over his son to make him so obedient all of a sudden. He said nothing, however, but went at once down into the cabin where he found the girl making herself perfectly at home tidying up the place.

"Eben's come," the captain laconically remarked.

"So I understand," and the girl smiled.

"Ye heard what was said, eh?"

"Certainly. I'm not deaf."

"Sure, sure. Me temper got the best of me to-night. But I couldn't help it, fer that boy did more'n stir me up. Guess he's cooled down now, though I'm mighty surprised that he knuckled under so soon. It's not a bit like Eb's way, let me tell ye that."

"I am very sorry to give all this trouble," the girl acknowledged. "I feel ashamed of myself."

"Most likely ye do, Miss. We all feel that way at times. But I must git a hustle on, an' tote up some clothes fer the night, an' a snack of grub fer Eben. He's

mighty fond of his stummick, that boy is. He'd eat every hour of the day, jist the same as a chicken, an' then wouldn't be satisfied."

Captain Tobin was much surprised that his son asked him no questions that night. He did not even refer to the cabin, but after he had eaten two large slices of bread, well soaked in molasses, he stretched himself out upon the deck, drew a heavy quilt over his body, and was soon fast asleep. The captain, however, did not sleep for some time. He sat upon the cover of the hatchway and puffed at an old corn-cob, which had been brought into service after the ruin of his favourite clay pipe. It was a beautiful night, and not a breath of wind ruffled the surface of the river. The captain was thinking seriously, as he was greatly puzzled what to do with the girl who had thrust herself so unceremoniously upon him. He could not put her ashore, that was quite evident, and he knew that he could not keep her presence a secret from Eben for any length of time. And then there was Martha. What would she and Flo say when they heard of it? This thought brought the perspiration to his forehead, causing him to shift uneasily. And the neighbours! What a rare bit of gossip it would be when they heard of it. And hear of it they certainly would, and he would be disgraced. It was somewhat late when he at length rolled himself up in his blanket by his son's side. Silence reigned near the cabin, and he fell asleep feeling that he had done the best that he could under the circumstances.

He awoke early, and scrambled to his feet. Eben was still asleep, so he moved about as quietly as possible so as not to disturb him. Far off in the east the dawn of a new day was breaking, and the sky was resplendent with the soft rosy tints of the virgin morn. From the shore came faint twitterings of birds just awaking from slumber. Presently the raucous honks of autos some

distance down the road fell upon his ears. In a few minutes the cars appeared, and drew up at the wharf not far away. Several men alighted, and from their actions the captain could tell that they were very much excited. Then more autos arrived, until about twenty men were standing upon the wharf and the road. He wondered what they wanted, and what had brought them there at such an early hour. When, however, he saw them rowing from the shore in several flat-bottom boats, the meaning of the commotion flashed upon his mind. They were searching for the missing girl, believing that she had been drowned the night before. The captain was in a quandary. His first impulse was to hail the men, and tell them that the missing one was safe. But what would the girl think of him if he betrayed her? No, he would not do such a thing without speaking to her first. He glanced toward the cabin, and to his surprise saw smoke coming from the stove-pipe protruding through the roof of the cabin. The girl, he knew, must be awake, so he might as well inform her at once.

He hurried away aft, and paused at the cabin door. It was open, and glancing down he saw the girl busily engaged in preparing breakfast. The appetising odour of coffee greeted his nostrils, and he heard something sizzling in the frying-pan. Just then the girl glanced up, and a bright smile of welcome illumined her face. Her cheeks were flushed with the heat and exercise, and the captain thought he had never beheld a more charming face.

"Good morning," she greeted. "Come in; breakfast is almost ready."

"Well, I'll be hanged!" the captain ejaculated as he descended the stairs. "What in time are ye up so early fer?"

"Isn't the cook always supposed to be up early?" the girl questioned, while her eyes sparkled with merriment.

"S'pose so," and the captain scratched his head in a dubious manner. "But I wasn't lookin' upon you as a cook, fer I had no idea that ye understood anything about a kitchen."

"Well, then, you were much mistaken. Just sit down, and try this egg-on-toast, and this coffee. I have learned a few things, so am not altogether useless. Cooking is one of my accomplishments, though, perhaps, I may not suit such an expert as you."

After the captain had washed himself in the granite-iron basin, and carefully brushed his hair, he sat down at the little side-table. His breakfast was already before him, but he would not touch it until the girl was ready for hers. He noted with appreciation that the oil-cloth on the table was especially clean, and how neatly the few dishes were arranged.

"Well, this is some breakfast," he complimented. "I never expected to find this awaitin' me."

"Are you satisfied with your cook now?" the girl smilingly asked.

"Satisfied!" The captain paused in the act of lifting his cup of coffee to his lips. "Did I ever say I wasn't satisfied?"

"Not exactly, though you acted that way last night."

"I know I did, an' I'm of the same opinion still. I'm not satisfied while them fellers are out draggin' the river fer yer body."

At these words a startled look came into the girl's eyes, and she dropped her fork upon her plate.

"Dragging the river for my body!" she gasped.

"Sure; thar are several boats not fer from here now, an' the men in 'em seem mighty excited. It does seem a pity fer 'em to be doin' sich a thing while you are safe an' sound in this cabin. Thar's something uncanny about it, which is not at all to my likin'. Don't ye think I'd better holler out, an' tell 'em that you're all right?"

"No, no," the girl protested, rising to her feet. "Don't say a word. If they think I'm drowned, all the better. That's just what I want them to think."

"Good Lord!" The captain stared in amazement at the agitated girl. "What am I to do, then? I can't stay here an' see them poor fellers doin' sich a useless job. An' besides, they must be about heart-broken."

"Indeed they're not," the girl emphatically declared. "If they are the ones I believe they are, you needn't worry about them, for they have no hearts to break. I must have a peek at them."

"Be careful, if ye don't want to be seen, Miss," the captain warned, as the girl stood on one of the steps and cautiously peered out. She was instantly down again, her face very white.

"There's a boat coming straight for us!" she excitedly explained. "It's only a short distance off. Go on deck quick and send the men away. Don't let them come on board."

With a bound the captain was up out of the cabin. He was determined to protect the girl, although he felt that he was making a fool of himself. But while she was on his boat, and under his care, no one was going to molest her. He stood silently watching the row-boat as it drew near. It contained three men, two at the oars, and one seated astern.

"Say," the latter called out, "did you see a young woman drifting about here in a boat last night?"

"Did I see what?" the captain asked, apparently surprised.

"A young woman, Miss Randall, in a boat last night? She has disappeared, and we're afraid she's drowned."

"No, I didn't see any young woman driftin' around here in a boat last night," the captain replied. "What makes ye think she's drowned herself?"

"Because a boat was found adrift in South Bay last

night, containing one oar and a woman's hat. The hat belonged to Miss Randall, and as she is missing, it is feared that she either drowned herself or met with an accident."

"Dear me, that's serious. Why would she want to drown herself?"

"Oh, some family trouble, I guess. Her folks wanted her to marry a man she had no use for. That's him standing there on the wharf now."

"Ye don't tell!" The captain turned his head and looked shoreward. "Wonder why he isn't helpin' to search fer his sweetheart. He seems to be mighty cool about the affair."

"Oh, he's afraid of soiling his hands and clothes." The man spoke in a low voice, for he was now close alongside. "He's Lord Something-or-Other's son, an' wouldn't think of associating with such common cusses as us. He belongs to the upper-crust, doncher-know." The man smiled, and his companions grinned. It was quite evident that they were all familiar with the story.

"An' so ye say the gal yer lookin' fer is Miss Randall, daughter of Henry Randall, the big lumber merchant?" the captain asked.

"That's who she is; his only daughter."

"An' he wants her to marry *that?*" and the captain motioned toward the wharf.

"Sure. Is it any wonder she'd want to commit suicide? She'd be a fool if she wouldn't. But, there, we must get back to work. We just dropped alongside, thinking ye might have seen her drifting around last night, and heard a scream or a splash."

"What makes ye think it was around here she done the deed?" the captain asked.

"Because her folks have their summer house a short distance below the wharf, and the boat which was found

drifting in South Bay belongs to Bill Sanson up on the hill. Aren't they reasons enough?"

"It does look reasonable," the captain acknowledged. "I s'pose her pa an' ma are about crazy over her disappearance. I know I should be about Flo."

"Her father isn't home," the man explained. "He's away somewhere on a business trip. As for her mother, well——" He paused, pulled a plug of tobacco out of his pocket, and bit off a chew. Then he turned to his companions. "Come, boys, suppose we get back? We've wasted too much time already."

The captain watched them as they rowed away, and his eyes twinkled with merriment. He was smiling when he returned to the cabin. The girl there was smiling, too, although it was easy to tell that she had been greatly agitated.

"Have they gone?" she asked in a low voice.

"Oh, yes, they've gone back to look fer you. Say, Miss, I don't like this bizness one bit. It's a mighty spooky affair, an' gits on me nerves. Don't ye feel a bit shaky yerself?"

"I suppose I should," the girl thoughtfully replied. "But under the circumstances I can't. Don't you remember what that man told you?"

"About you marryin' that Lord Fiddlesticks?"

"Yes, though that is not his name."

"I know it isn't, but it doesn't matter. But, thar, I must take some grub to Eben. He'll be down here soon, I'm sartin, if I don't head him off. Thar's nuthin' like grub to hold that boy in check. I've got to go ashore this mornin' to git some tea. Eben fergot all about it last night."

"Will you get a few things for me?" the girl asked. "I will make out a list at once."

"I was expectin' something like that, Miss. I knew ye wouldn't be satisfied with what this cabin contains,

but would want many things extry. I s'pose ye'll order a hull outfit of table linen, a set of chiny dishes, a new coffee pot, an' dear knows what all. I'd have to go to the city fer them things."

"No, not at all," the girl laughingly replied. "I can get along nicely with what you have here. I only need something for myself, as I came away without anything, not even a comb. I hope you don't mind."

"Oh, I don't mind, as fer as I'm consarned. But I'm wonderin' what Martha an' Flo'll think if they ever hear of it."

"I am sure they will be pleased, Captain, when they know how kind you have been to an unfortunate girl. When I see them I shall explain, so everything will be all right."

"I hope so, Miss. But if ye knew Martha as well as I do mebbe ye wouldn't feel so sure. Anyway, I s'pose it can't be helped now. Jist have yer list ready when I come back from feedin' Eben, an' I'll do the best I kin."

CHAPTER V

CAPTAIN SAMUEL GOES SHOPPING

CAPTAIN TOBIN rowed toward the shore with long steady strokes. He was in no hurry as he had all the morning on his hands. He did not expect the wind to rise until the turn of the tide, which would be about noon. He was thinking of Eben, and wondering what had come over the boy to make him so docile in such a short time. He had seemed more animated than usual, and had eaten his breakfast without making any embarrassing enquiries. He had not even referred to the men searching the river for the missing girl, neither did he speak of the conversation that had taken place between his father and the man in the small boat. All this was puzzling to the captain, for it was very unlike Eben's usual manner. Was it possible that the boy knew anything about the matter, or had a hand in the affair himself? he wondered. He banished the idea, however, as too absurd to be entertained even for a moment.

Reaching the wharf, he tied the boat, and was making his way to the store when he was suddenly hailed.

"Hi, there," someone called, "let me have your boat, will you?"

Looking around, he saw the immaculately-dressed young man coming toward him from the lower side of the wharf. He knew that this must be the missing girl's lover, and he had no desire to meet him. There seemed to be no escape, however, so he was forced to stop and

wait until the man sauntered up to where he was standing.

"Was ye callin' me?" the captain asked.

"I was," the man replied. "I want your boat."

"Ye do, eh? Well, I guess I want it meself more'n you do, by the look of things."

"But I want to help with the search."

"Oh, so you're Lord Fiddlesticks' son, are ye? Glad to meet ye," and the captain held out his hand. "I'm Sam'l Tobin, captain an' owner of the 'Eb an' Flo,' layin' jist out yonder."

"So I supposed," was the drawling response. "But it makes no difference to me who or what you are. You might be the devil for all I care. All I want is your small boat."

"Come, come, Mr. Lord Fiddlesticks, don't talk in sich a high an' mighty manner; it might not be good fer yer health. A young chap about your make-up tried it once upon me, but it didn't work out to his satisfaction. He acknowledged it when he got out of the hospital. See?"

"Oh, I didn't mean to offend you," and the young man retreated a few steps. "I'm all upset this morning over Miss Randall's disappearance, and so am hardly responsible for what I say. Let me have your boat, will you? I'll pay you well for it."

The captain eyed the young man critically from head to foot, especially his soft white hands. Then he shook his head in a doubtful manner.

"What's the matter?" the young man impatiently asked. "Is there anything wrong with me?"

"That's what I'm jist tryin' to figger out. I s'pose it's really me duty to take ye home to yer ma, but I ain't got time this mornin'. Does she knew where ye are?"

"What do you mean, you ignorant clodhopper? Do you take me for a baby?"

"Not exactly, as yer too big fer one. But accordin' to yer togs one would imagine that ye've jist come from the nursery. No, it wouldn't be right to let ye have me boat, fer ye'd be sure to spile yer pretty white hands an' soil yer bib an' pinny. An' besides, if anything happened to ye, I'd be held responsible. No, ye'd better trot along home to yer mamma before she comes after ye with a strap."

The young man was now very angry, and he was about to give vent to his feelings in a furious outburst. But the stopping of an auto on the road near by suddenly arrested his attention, causing him to stare hard at the driver who had just alighted. Glad of this timely diversion, the captain moved away and made toward the store. In passing the car, he did not recognise the driver, who, with his back toward him, was examining the engine, and seemed to be heeding nothing else. But no sooner had the captain passed than he straightened himself up, cast one swift glance toward the man down on the wharf, and at once followed the captain into the store, where he stood quietly at one side without speaking to anybody.

The captain was already at the counter, fumbling with the list which had been given him. He was well acquainted with the storekeeper, a middle-aged man of genial countenance.

"Here's a list of things I want, Ezry," he explained, as he handed over the paper. Guess ye kin make out the writin'."

The storekeeper adjusted his spectacles and studied the paper for a few minutes. Then he looked keenly at his customer, while his eyes twinkled.

"Are yer wife an' daughter with ye on this trip, Captain?" he asked. "They seem to be out of 'most everything women need. It's a wonder ye didn't get them

outfitted in the city. D'ye think this is a department store? Guess they must have been studying Eaton's catalogue."

Captain Samuel coughed and shuffled uneasily.

"Why, what's on the list, Ezry?"

"Didn't ye read it?"

"No, never looked at it. I thought it was all right, an' that ye kept 'most everything here."

"Well, I don't, and never expect to. Now, look at this, for instance," and the storekeeper touched the paper with the forefinger of his right hand. A kimona, just think of that! I never had a call for such a thing before."

"Is that down thar?" the captain enquired, reaching for the list.

"Sure, ye can see for yourself. But that isn't all. A pair of pyjamas is wanted, bedroom slippers, table-cloth, and napkins. Say, Captain, your wife an' daughter must be getting some new fandangled notions all of a sudden. Going to use them on the boat, eh?"

The captain made no reply. His face was very red, and he was mopping his forehead with a big pocket-handkerchief.

"It does work ye up, doesn't it?" the storekeeper chuckled.

"Work me up! Why, I'm bilin' hot. But fer the love of heaven, isn't there anything on that list ye do keep? Guess we'll have to send to Eaton's after all, only them things are wanted right away."

The storekeeper again studied the list, and with a pencil scored out the articles he did not have.

"I haven't that, nor that, nor that," he commented.

"Well, fer goodness' sakes what have ye got, Ezry? Tell me quick, fer I can't stay here all the mornin'."

"Nor that, nor that, nor that," the storekeeper continued. "Ah, I have that," and his face brightened.

"Yes, I've got a tooth-brush, or I did have one a year ago. Let me see." He turned and began to rummage in a dilapidated show-case, and at length brought forth with triumph the required article. He laid it carefully on the counter, and resumed his study of the list. A brush and comb were the next requisites, and these, after considerable searching, were produced.

"Yer doin' fine, Ezry," the captain encouraged. "Don't work too hard, though I would like to git back to me boat before the river freezes. I don't want to lay out thar all winter. What's next on the program?"

"A box of choc'lates, hard-centres. I don't keep 'em, Captain. I've only mixed-candy an' conversation lozenges. Maybe they'd like some of them."

"All right, put 'em in; it's all the same to me. I never eat sich things. Is that all?"

"Yes, I guess that's all I can supply," the storekeeper replied as he finally viewed the list. "If ye wanted molasses, sugar, or anything in the hardware line I could accommodate ye. But kimonas, pyjamas, bedroom slippers, and such things, I don't carry."

During this conversation the auto driver had been an attentive listener. At times it was difficult for him to refrain from laughing outright, especially at the captain's embarrassment. It was not for amusement, however, that he was there, but for something far more important. What he learned seemed to please him, so with the light of satisfaction in his eyes, he left the store and returned to his car. When the captain came out a few minutes later he greeted him in a friendly manner.

"Fine morning, Captain," he accosted.

"Hello, John!" the captain replied. "I didn't know it was you. Where did ye drop from?"

"Oh, just on my way from the city. I didn't expect to meet you here."

"An' I didn't expect to be here, John. I've been

hung up fer hours, an' can't git a breath of wind. I should be loadin' at Spoon Island by this time."

"Perhaps a rest will do you good, Captain. A trip ashore once in a while will do you no harm. You have been shopping, I see? I didn't know your wife and Flo were with you on this trip. They were home when I left."

"What makes ye think they're with me?" the captain somewhat sharply asked.

"Oh, it was merely a surmise on my part," and the young man smiled. "I happened to overhear the conversation between you and the storekeeper; that was all."

"Well, s'pose I was buyin' things fer me wife an' daughter, what of it? Why should ye think they're on the boat when I buy things they want?"

"It was just a notion on my part. I happened to hear what they wanted, and naturally wondered why you should go to a store like that when you could have got all the articles in the city to far better advantage. It's none of my business, of course, only it made me somewhat curious."

The captain made no reply but turned and looked out upon the river, where the men were searching for the missing girl. The young man, too, looked, and there was an amused expression in his eyes as he at length turned them upon the captain's face.

"They don't seem to be meeting with much success, do they?" he casually remarked.

"Seems not," was the quiet reply.

"Perhaps they are not searching in the right place. They may be all astray, and the girl is not drowned after all."

"What makes ye think that?" the captain somewhat anxiously asked.

"Oh, certain things have made me come to the con-

clusion that the girl did not drown herself. It would be a most unlikely thing for Miss Randall to do. She is not that kind."

"H'm, that's no reason," the captain retorted. "Ye never know these days what notions gals'll take."

"I believe you are right," and the young man smiled. "They do take queer notions at times, as was proven by the list of articles you tried to buy in the store just a few minutes ago."

"Hey, what's that yer sayin'?" the captain demanded, swinging swiftly around. "What d'ye mean by them words?"

"Don't you know, sir? I think you understand my meaning. Look well after Miss Randall, and tell her to keep out of sight. So long. I hope to see you later."

The young man sprang into his car, and in another minute was speeding up the road, leaving the captain staring after him, dumb with astonishment.

CHAPTER VI

EBEN MAKES A DISCOVERY

AFTER Eben had eaten his breakfast he sat for a few minutes watching his father as he rowed ashore. He next turned his eyes upon the boats searching for the missing girl. He even smiled, a somewhat unusual thing for him, especially at such an early morning hour. He was sitting upon deck, leaning against the mast full in the glare of the slowly-strengthening sun. Presently his left hand was run through his mass of tousled hair, while his right came down with a resounding whack upon his knee. Something out of the ordinary was amusing this tall ungainly youth which would have surprised his father had he been present.

At length he rose slowly to his feet, yawned, stretched himself, and moved cautiously along the deck toward the cabin. He walked around it once without deigning to look at the open door. The second time he shot a swift furtive glance, and caught a fleeting glimpse of someone in the cabin. His heart gave a great leap and he was about to hurry on his way, when a merry laugh arrested his steps, causing him to turn and peer down into the cabin. Then his cheeks crimsoned as he saw the girl standing at the foot of the steps, her face wreathed with a sunny smile.

"Don't be afraid; I won't hurt you," she told him. "I'm as harmless as a kitten."

Instantly Eben's mouth expanded into a grin, and he looked sheepishly around. He knew that he was on

forbidden ground, and this added to his embarrassment. At the same time it gave him a certain degree of pleasure, as forbidden sweets are always the most delectable.

"Come on down," the girl invited. "I want someone to talk to, for it is rather lonesome here."

"You'd better come up," Eben found voice to reply. "It's nicer here in the sun."

"I know it is," and the girl's face became sober in an instant. "But I am afraid."

"What are ye afraid of?"

"Those men in the boats, of course."

"That they'll git ye?"

"Yes."

"But they won't out there, though," and again Eben grinned. "I knew ye didn't drown yerself. Ye'd be a fool to do it, wouldn't ye?"

"How did you know?"

"Oh, I saw ye last night headin' fer the 'Eb an' Flo.'"

"Did you see me come on board?"

"No, it was too dark. But when dad wouldn't let me go into the cabin, I guessed what was up. It was nicer down there than floatin' in the river, wasn't it? Wonder where ye'd be now, an' how ye'd feel if ye had drowned yerself."

The girl shivered, and her face turned white.

"Are you hungry?" she unexpectedly asked.

"Why, I jist had me breakfast."

"I know you did, but your father said you are always hungry. Suppose you come down and I'll give you something more. You didn't have much to eat."

To his own surprise Eben at once obeyed, lumbered down the steps, and seated himself by the little table. The girl placed a boiled egg before him, cut a slice of bread, and poured out a cup of coffee."

"I cooked one egg too many," she explained.

"Lucky ye did," Eben replied as he broke the shell. "Say, it's great havin' you here. What's yer name?"

"Only Jess. I hope you will like it."

"I like it already. I think it's nice. An' say, I won't let anyone git ye."

"That's kind of you. But I thought you hated girls."

"Who told ye that?"

"Your father, of course. Isn't it true?"

"Mebbe it is, an' mebbe it isn't. An' mebbe after all it is. I never did take much stock in girls."

"Why?"

"Dunno, 'cept it's me make-up. Girls are too fussy fer me, so I like to keep out of their way."

"But you came my way this morning, though," the girl smilingly reminded.

"Oh, you're different. I like what you did. You came here to be protected, an' I'm goin' to see that ye are. I won't let them men git ye."

"What will you do if they come on board?"

Eben dropped his knife and fork suddenly upon the table, while his hands clenched hard.

"They won't come on board," he declared. "They'll do well to git close to this boat. Look," and he pointed to a rifle standing in one corner of the cabin.

"Oh, you mustn't shoot," the girl protested. "You might kill someone, and then you would be hung for murder."

"No, it's not likely I'll shoot, though I'll feel like doin' it if them men come snookin' 'round here. I'll jist keep the gun in me hands, that's all. Guess that'll be hint enough fer them fellers."

"Oh, I wish a strong wind would blow," the girl fervently exclaimed. "I want to get away from here, and out of sight of those men searching for me over there."

"It does give one a kind of creepy feelin', doesn't it?"

Eben replied. "But I think we'll git a breeze when the tide comes up, an' then we'll show ye what this old tub kin do."

"Won't that be great! I have often longed for a sail on the river in a boat such as this. How you must enjoy this life. I know I should."

"Would ye?" Eben asked. "Well, I guess ye'd soon git tired of it if ye had to do it all the time. It makes a mighty big difference whether ye do a thing fer pleasure or fer business. I don't like it, anyway, an' I'm goin' to git clear of it as soon as I kin. Mebbe I'll follow your example, an' run away."

"Where do you want to go to, and what do you want to do?"

"I want to go to college an' learn to be an engineer."

"An engineer! What, to run an engine on the railroad?"

"No, not that. I want to be a civil engineer, to build bridges, an' do sich things. I'd like it better'n anything else."

"Why don't you, then? Won't your father let you?"

"No. He thinks it's all nonsense. He says he's raisin' me to take charge of this boat some day. But, gee whiz, he's countin' on the wrong chicken. Anyway, by the time dad's done sailin' this boat, it'll be fit fer the scrap heap."

"Why do you want to be a civil engineer?" the girl asked. "Do you know anything about the work?"

"Y' bet I do," and Eben smacked his lips. "I've been studyin' bridges fer years, 'specially the one across the falls. I've a lot of drawin's of it. Would ye like to see 'em?"

"Indeed I should," was the interested reply. "I used to draw some myself."

"Ye did!" Eben looked at the girl in admiration. "I

never met anyone before who could draw. Hope ye won't make fun of my scrawls."

"Certainly not. You don't think I would do such a thing, do you?"

Eben made no reply as he was already on his feet, groping with his right hand upon a shelf over his bunk. In a few minutes he brought down a well worn scribbler, opened it, and laid it with pride upon the table.

"There's my drawin's," he began. "No one but meself ever sot eyes upon 'em before."

"You didn't even show them to your parents or sister?" the girl asked in surprise, as she looked upon the first drawing presented to view.

"Indeed I didn't. They'd only make fun of me if I did. I hate to be laughed at, don't you? It riles one all up."

"It does sometimes," the girl acknowledged. "But, then, it is better not to mind what people say or do, but just go on with our work. Why, what nice drawings you have here. I can hardly believe you did them yourself without anyone to teach you."

Eben made no reply, but his eyes shone with complete satisfaction. The girl was seated at the table and he was standing by her side. A thrill of joy possessed him such as he had never experienced before. This beautiful girl appreciated his drawings, and that was enough.

The sketches were crude, but they showed considerable signs of promise, and this Jess realised as she carefully examined them. One bridge, especially, arrested her attention, the one which spanned the falls.

"You must have made a long study of this," she remarked. "I recognised it at once."

"I did, Miss. I spent a whole day there once, an' every time we go under it I see something new. I ain't got it quite right yit."

For a few minutes the girl examined the drawings without speaking. There was a far-away look in her eyes when at length she pushed the book a little from her.

"Your drawings are remarkably good, considering everything," she told him. "But how would you like for me to give you some lessons?"

"How would I like it?" Eben gasped in amazement. "You give me lessons in drawin'!"

"And why not? We shall have time, I am sure, and I have not yet forgotten all I learned."

"Oh, it would be great! But what about dad? I'm afraid he won't let ye. He might think it will spoil me from bein' a captain some day. He wants me to study navigation, or something like that, which I hate."

Before any reply could be made, a slight shock was heard against the side of the boat which startled them both. The girl sprang to her feet, and looked up the stairway. Then the sound of footsteps was heard upon the deck above.

"They are after me!" she gasped. "Oh, where can I hide?"

"Stay right here," Eben ordered, as he leaped toward the stairs. "I'll fix 'em."

His foot had barely touched the first step when his father's body bulked large in the doorway above. Instinctively Eben drew back, and stood on the defensive, with every nerve strung to the highest tension.

Slowly the captain descended, and when he had reached the bottom of the stairway he stopped and looked around. In an instant he comprehended the situation, and a twinkle appeared in his eyes as he turned them upon his son.

"Is this the way ye obey orders?" he demanded. "Didn't I tell ye not to come near this cabin?"

"I know ye did, but that was last night," was the

surly reply. "Ye didn't tell me to stay away this mornin'."

The captain stared at his son for a few seconds as if he had not heard aright.

"Well, I declare!" he exclaimed. "I gave ye credit fer some brains, but I guess I was mistaken."

"Don't blame your son, Captain," the girl interposed. "It was not his fault that he is here, but mine. I asked him to come."

"Ye did! Why, I thought ye didn't want anybody 'cept me to know of yer whereabouts."

"But it's different with your son here. He had to find out, anyway, you see, so it was just as well for him to do so this morning."

"So ye waited until I got on shore, eh? H'm, I guess all gals are alike, as sly as a weasel. As soon as the old man was out of the way, you two became very chummy. Fergot everything else most likely. It's a wonder ye weren't paradin' up an' down the deck."

"Oh, we took good care to keep out of sight," the girl laughingly replied. "We had enough sense left for that. This is certainly a great hiding place."

"D'ye think so, Miss? But mebbe it isn't so good as ye imagine."

A startled expression came into the girl's eyes, as she turned them full upon the captain's face.

"Thar, thar, don't be alarmed," the latter comforted. "I didn't mean to frighten ye. I only wanted to warn ye, that's all."

"Did you hear anything about me while ashore?" the girl asked. "Has anyone any suspicion that I am here?"

"It seems that way."

"Oh!"

"Yes," the captain continued, "I was talkin' to a young feller on shore, an' he sent ye his kind regards."

"Not Mr. Donaster! Oh, say it wasn't that man."

"No, it wasn't that critter, but another, an' a fine chap, too. Mebbe ye kin guess his name. He seemed mighty interested, an' asked me a number of questions."

"Did he?" The sigh of relief which the girl gave was more expressive than words. The captain chuckled as he watched her, and his eyes twinkled.

"Yes, Miss, he came along in a car an' tried to pump me dry with his queer questions. An' he was a mighty nice feller, too, good-natured, an' handsome enough fer any gal, no matter how pertic'ler she might be. He told me to take good care of ye. Hello! what's the matter?"

The cause of the captain's exclamation was the expression of confusion which suddenly overspread the girl's face. Eben also noticed it, and for the first time in his life a strange feeling began to agitate his heart. He could not account for it, but intuitively he felt a spirit of resentment against the man with the car. This beautiful girl had come into his lonely, misunderstood life like the sweet invigorating breath of spring, and he could not bear the thought that anyone else should have the slightest claim upon her. It was the jealous unreasoning throb of a first great love. The cabin seemed to be unusually close. He must have fresh air, and he wanted to be by himself that he might think. With a bound he was up the stairs to the deck above.

"Well, I declare!" the captain ejaculated, as he stared after his son. "What's the matter with that boy, anyway? Ye'd think a hull pack of wolves was chasin' him by the way he left this cabin. I can't understand him nohow."

The captain had barely finished speaking when a gust of wind struck the boat, causing the cabin door to close with a bang.

"Guess the breeze has come at last," he remarked. "It should be a big blow after this long calm. You jist

keep close here while I go on deck. By the look of things we should be out of this in a few minutes. How'll that suit ye?"

"Oh, I shall be so thankful," the girl declared. "I cannot feel safe while we are so near that search-party. Please get away as soon as you can."

CHAPTER VII

GIVING MARTHA THE GO-BY

THE wind which had come up with the tide was steadily increasing in strength, causing the "Eb and Flo" to scud rapidly forward with every inch of her one big sail stretched to its full capacity. There had been considerable work before the boat was well under way, and as the captain now stood at the wheel he was breathing heavily from his strenuous exertions. But the light of satisfaction glowed in his eyes as he looked straight ahead, and gave a few final orders to his son.

Jess Randall stood by his side, her face aglow with animation, and her heart lighter than at any time since she had first come on board. It was a great relief to be out of the cabin and once more in the open with the fresh breeze whipping about her, and tossing her hair over cheeks and brow. The searching party was left behind, and the small boats seemed like mere vanishing specks in the distance. She had no fear now, for she believed that the "Eb and Flo" would carry her safely away from her pursuers, whither she did not know. The strain through which she had recently passed, and the want of sleep the night before were telling upon her now, causing her to feel very tired. She leaned against the cabin for support, and this the captain at once noted.

"Here, take this wheel fer a minute," he ordered. "I want to go below. Jist keep her at that," he continued, when the girl with uncertain hands laid hold of the wheel. "Ye kin do it all right."

For the first time in her life, Jess was in command of a vessel, and a delightful thrill swept through her as she watched the full-swelled sail, and listened to the ripple of the boat as it cut through the water. What an easy thing it was to control such a craft, and cause it to do one's slightest bidding. And what a sense of freedom possessed her. It was a life for which she had so often longed, and she thought with amusement of her various social activities in the city. She had always been fond of life in the open, and she was never happier than when wandering through the fields or along some secluded woodland way. But such opportunities had been rare, for the barriers which surrounded her had been too firm and high.

In another minute the captain came from the cabin, carrying a three-legged stool, which he placed upon the deck.

"Thar, Miss," he said, "I think that'll be more comfortable than standin'. Ye kin lean aginst the cabin, providin' ye don't go to sleep an' push it over."

The girl smiled as she resigned the wheel and sat down upon the stool. It was certainly a relief to sit there leaning against the cabin for she felt unusually tired.

"You are very good to me, Captain," she remarked, turning her face to his. "I do not know how I can ever thank you."

"Don't try, Miss. I don't like to be thanked, anyway. It takes all the pleasure out of doin' anything, accordin' to my way of thinkin'."

The girl made no immediate reply, but sat looking out upon the river and away to the road winding along the shore. She could see an occasional auto speeding on its way, and she wondered what had become of the one which had been at the store when the captain was there. She was quite certain who the young driver was, and her heart beat somewhat faster when she thought of

him. She longed to know how he had surmised where she was, and what he had said to the captain. She did not like to ask any questions lest she should betray her feelings, so she preferred to remain silent. She was aroused from her reverie by the captain shouting to his son.

"Hi, thar, Eben," he called, "hustle up an' split some wood. It's dinner time, an' thar isn't a stick cut. Guess ye must have burned it all up this mornin', Miss," he added, turning to his fair companion. "Anyway, that boy never keeps enough on hand. I wish to goodness he'd take some interest in things instead of mopin' around all the time."

"Perhaps he does take an interest in things he likes," the girl suggested.

"Then I'd like to find out what they are, Miss. I know he's mighty fond of eatin' an' sleepin', but I guess that's about as fer as it goes."

"I made a discovery this morning, Captain," was the quiet reply.

"Ye did! In what way?"

"I discovered that your son has a great fondness for drawing."

"Humph!" the captain grunted, as he gave the wheel a quick, savage turn to the right. "Say, I nearly ran through that salmon net. It's too fer out, blamed if it isn't. Yes, I know Eben's fond of drawin', an' that's the trouble. He'd fiddle around all day with a paper an' pencil if I'd let him, an' not do a hand's turn."

"But suppose he should make a success of his drawing, though?"

"In what way? Wouldn't it be better fer him to learn boatin' so he kin take charge of this craft some day?"

"He never will do that, Captain. His mind is set upon being an engineer, and you should encourage him all you can."

"An engineer!" The captain stared at the girl in amazement.

"Yes, an engineer. He has a great liking for that, and the drawings he has made are remarkably good, considering that he has had no one to teach him."

"Ye don't tell! But what has drawin's to do with engineerin', I'd like to know. Ye don't have to make drawin's to run an engine, do ye?"

"To be a civil engineer you do, and that is what your son wants to be. His mind is set upon bridge building, and you should see the drawings he has made of the bridge across the falls. I suppose you have never seen them?"

"No. Eben never showed 'em to me. Guess he was too scart."

"That's just the trouble, Captain. You have misunderstood the boy, and he has been doing this work on the sly. He showed them to me, though, and I have promised to give him some lessons."

"Ye have!"

"Yes, providing you will let me. And you will, won't you? It would be a great pity not to help and encourage him. If you do, you may be proud of him some day."

The captain gripped the wheel with firm hands, and looked straight before him. His face was a study, and the girl watched him somewhat curiously. She knew how his heart was set upon fitting Eben to take his place, and to relinquish that hope would be a great hardship.

"Guess I'll have to talk this over with Martha," he at length announced. "She an' Flo are so dead set upon Eben bein' a captain that I don't believe they'll listen to me fer a minute."

"But suppose Eben should take matters into his own hands?" Jess queried. "You may think you can control him, but you cannot tell how soon he may slip from

your grasp. Would it not be better to hold his affections by helping him in every way you can? I wish I could see your wife and daughter. I feel quite sure that I could make them see the matter in a different light. Perhaps I could change their minds."

"Mebbe ye could, Miss," and the captain gave a deep sigh. "But I can't hold out much hope. If ye knew 'em as well as I do, ye wouldn't feel very sure, let me tell ye that. An' besides, Miss, I don't think ye'll ever see 'em, anyway, not on this craft."

"I won't!" The expression in the girl's eyes showed her surprise. "Why, I thought we would be at your home to-day, and that I would surely meet them."

"Yes, we'll be at me home, all right," and the captain's face grew serious. "We'll see it, but we won't stop. Oh, no, it would be all up with me if Martha an' Flo should catch you here. We'll jist give 'em the go-by to-day, an' it'll be the fust time I've ever done sich a thing. I've been allus mighty glad to git home, even fer a few minutes."

"Captain, are you really afraid of your wife and daughter?" the girl asked. "Wouldn't it be very easy to explain how I came on this boat, and that it wasn't your fault at all?"

"I wouldn't git a chance to explain, Miss. Ye see, Martha an' Flo are fine women when it comes to cookin', lookin' after the house, an' sich things. But when it comes to the question of other women, an' 'specially one who has run away from home, an' can't give a reasonable account of herself, well, that's different."

"Oh, I see!" The girl caught her breath, and her face flushed. "They might think I'm not exactly straight; is that it?"

"Mebbe they might, an' that would make it hard fer me an' Eben."

"But won't they listen to reason, Captain? Surely they will believe you and your son."

"They might, Miss, but I don't like to face 'em. I'm no coward when it comes to runnin' this craft in a nasty gale, or doin' something extry risky; but I do wilt right down before Martha an' Flo when their ginger's up. Why, a man hasn't a ghost of a chance with them women. They're a wonder, an' no mistake."

"Then what do you intend to do?"

"Do! Why, thar's only one thing to do in sich a case, an' that is to give 'em the go-by, an' then git clear of you. As soon as we reach the quarry you'll have to light out. I hate to say it, Miss, but thar's too much at stake fer me to keep ye on board any longer. I should have sent ye away before this, but ye wouldn't go, so what was I to do?"

"I am really sorry that I have given you so much trouble," the girl apologised. "I am very grateful for what you have already done, and as soon as I reach the quarry I shall leave you at once. I know I have placed you in a most embarrassing position."

"An' what do ye intend to do after ye leave this boat?" the captain somewhat anxiously enquired.

"I have not the slightest idea. But I am not going to worry about that now. I shall be free, and that will be worth a great deal to me."

When dinner was at last over, they were again upon deck. Jess had prepared a tempting meal, and while she and the captain dined, Eben took his turn at the wheel. The boy had hardly spoken a word after his father's return from the store, but a new light shone in his eyes, and his step was more buoyant than before. The furtive look that he at times cast upon the fair passenger was one of profound admiration. To him she was the most beautiful and wonderful person he had ever

met, and her words of encouragement and appreciation had fallen upon his lonely soul like a refreshing rain upon a thirsty land.

The wind was stronger now, and running through the wide stretch of water, known as the "Long Reach," the boat encountered heavy swells, through which she surged, dashing the spray from her bow at each plunge. The captain was unusually silent, and Jess noticed that he was becoming somewhat nervous. This became more apparent the farther up the river they moved, and it was not until they had passed one of the three islands, which here studded the river, did she comprehend the meaning of the captain's uneasiness. With hands firmly grasping the wheel, he often cast his eyes shoreward, as if searching for some special object. Presently he emitted an exclamation of annoyance, and turned suddenly to the girl by his side.

"Git into the cabin," he ordered. "Martha's got the glass on us. I kin see her at the front door. Hustle. I don't want her to see ye. But ye needn't go all the way down, Miss. Jist set within the door, so she can't see ye."

Jess quickly obeyed, and perched upon the second step from the top, she waited to see what would happen.

"Does your wife always use the glass?" she at length asked.

"Allus, Miss. Guess she's had it turned on us ever since we hove in sight. Hope to goodness she hasn't spied you out."

The house toward which the captain's attention was directed, stood upon a gentle elevation, with a well-kept garden, sloping to the river. It was a cosy-looking place, and the surrounding trees protected the house from the storms of winter. The building was painted white, with dark trimmings, and owing to its situation, could be seen for miles from the river. The captain was naturally

proud of his home, and was always glad when it appeared in sight. But this day was the first exception during his long years of boating. His face became stern, and his hands gripped the wheel harder than ever as he set his mind upon the task of running by that snug cottage on the hill side. Why had he been such a fool, he asked himself, as to let this strange runaway girl remain on board? He should have notified the search-party at once as to her whereabouts, and delivered her into their hands. His heart, however, softened as he glanced down and saw the girl's wistful eyes fixed full upon his face.

"I am very sorry, Captain, that I am causing you so much worry," she remarked. "But for me you would soon be home with your wife and daughter."

"Tut, tut, Miss, don't ye bother about that," the old man replied, as he gave the wheel a vigorous yank to the right. "This boat was headin' straight fer the shore. She's run in thar so often that she does it of her own accord. She's almost human, this boat is. My! won't Martha git the surprise of her life when she sees us go by. She's wavin' now, blamed if she ain't! an' runnin' down to the shore. An' that's Flo behind her! Mebbe Flo'll try to swim out to us, fer she's great in the water, almost like a fish."

The "Eb and Flo" was now almost abreast of the captain's home, and scudding so fast that in a few minutes she would be by. It was possible for Jess to see the two women standing upon the shore, frantically waving their arms and shouting across the water. What they said she could not distinguish, though she guessed the purport of the words they were uttering. She pitied the captain, for she was well aware that when he did go home his reception would be far from pleasant. She kept her eyes riveted upon the women until they became mere specks

in the distance. Then she turned to the captain. He was mopping his face with a big red handkerchief, and his hands were trembling.

"Darn it!" he growled. "I'm all het up. It must be ninety in the shade. Git me a drink of water, will ye?"

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT THE COW DID

"IF she won't take ye in, yer welcome to stay here all night."

The "Eb and Flo" was lying securely fastened to the wharf at the Spoon Island stone quarry. She had made a good run up the river, and had reached her destination late in the afternoon. Captain Tobin was standing upon deck looking upon Jess and Eben as they started up the track toward the quarry.

"Eben'll show ye Mrs. Ricksteen's house," he told the girl. "I guess she needs extry help with the crowd of men she allus has. But she might want a recommendation, fer she's mighty pertic'ler, Mrs. Ricksteen is. Anyway, if she won't take ye in, yer welcome to come back here."

Jess thanked the captain, and told him that she was sure she could make out all right. She would return in the morning to tell him of her success, and get her belongings.

"See that Eben behaves himself," the captain reminded. "An' don't let him stay too long. Thar's a lot of work to do on board to-night."

"You needn't worry," was the girl's smiling reply. "Eben can return just as soon as he shows me the way. I won't run off with him."

The captain stood and watched them as they walked slowly up the track. "My, my, she's a fine gal, an' no mistake," he mused. "I never saw Eben so taken up

with anyone as he is with her. Why, his face brightens the instant she speaks to him. Seems to me he's head over heels in love with her. It's only nat'ral, I s'pose. If I was young meself I'd lose me head an' heart over a gal like that. It'd be great to have her fer a daughter-in-law. Wonder what Martha an' Flo'd say."

While the captain was thus musing, the young couple made their way slowly along the track which led across a wide stretch of interval. Eben was somewhat embarrassed at first when he found himself alone with the beautiful girl, so his words were few. But as they advanced, he felt more at ease, and readily answered all of her questions. He explained how the truck, carrying the granite blocks, was impelled across the interval to the river by the impetus given on the steep hill ahead. Two men were always in charge, who handled the brakes, and stopped the truck just at the right place on the wharf.

"But isn't it very dangerous coming down that steep hill?" Jess asked, as she looked up the track which ran through a forest of small trees.

"Y' bet," was the emphatic reply. "I came down once, an' me hair was standin' straight on end, an' I didn't have any breath left when we got to the bottom. It was great!"

"It certainly must have been," the girl enthusiastically declared. "I would like to try it myself."

"Ye would!" Eben stopped and stared at his companion in amazement.

"Yes, and why not? I like a little excitement once in a while."

"I guess ye must, Miss."

"Don't call me 'Miss,' say 'Jess,' I like it better. We are chums, you know, and chums must not put on any airs."

Eben's face coloured, and his heart beat fast. It was

great to have her talk in such a friendly way. He believed that she liked him, too, and that meant a great deal to him. The world seemed a much brighter place since this runaway girl entered his life.

They had crossed the interval and were almost at the base of the hill, when a rumbling sound fell upon their ears.

"It's the truck comin'," Eben explained, at the same time laying his hand upon the girl's arm and drawing her off the track. "Now ye'll see something worth while."

And truly indeed they were both destined to behold something of a most unexpected and terrible nature during the next few minutes. They saw the truck far up the hill, and almost held their breath as it took the wild plunge in its mad career to the valley below. Just at this exciting instant, however, the bushes close to the line were suddenly parted, and a large cow appeared. She stepped upon the track, stopped, and looked up. Before a word could be said or a hand lifted, the truck swept upon her like a catapult. A sickening crash ensued, and men, cow, truck and granite blocks were hurled from the track, and tossed in a confused heap among the bushes several rods away.

When the crash took place, Jess gave a cry of dismay and buried her face in her hands to shut out the terrible sight. This was but for an instant, however, for she realised that something must be done to help the unfortunate men should they be alive. Eben was staring as if rooted to the spot, his body trembling with excitement.

"Isn't it awful!" he groaned. "Oh, what kin we do?"

"Let us go and see," was the reply. "Come on."

Together they made their way up the track as fast as possible, and as they approached the spot where the accident had taken place, an indescribable feeling came

over the girl. Suppose the men were dead! And if not dead, they surely must be fearfully mangled. How could she endure the sight? But struggle on she did, and at length saw one of the men limping painfully toward her. His clothes were torn, and his face and hands were bleeding. He staggered as he walked, and when he reached the track he sank down upon the ground.

"Are you much hurt?" Jess asked, hurrying to his side. Her fears had all vanished, and she thought not of herself, but only of the injured man.

"Never mind me," the man replied. "I'll be all right shortly. But for God's sake do something for Bill. He's over there among the stones all smashed up. I was pitched clear."

With a bound Eben left the track, and leaped among the bushes down where Bill was lying, half buried beneath a tangle of stones, trees and truck. The man was very still, and to all appearance dead. But, as Eben began to free his body, he opened his eyes and moaned. Fortunately none of the monster stones rested upon him, but only a small bent tree held his legs as in a vice. With considerable difficulty Eben was able to free the man, and then lifting him in his arms staggered out of the ruins, and laid his burden gently upon the ground a short distance away. In another minute Jess was kneeling by the injured man's side, wiping the blood which flowed down his face with her small white handkerchief.

"We must have help at once," she exclaimed, turning to Eben. "Is there a doctor anywhere near? Go for him, quick."

Scarcely had she ceased speaking ere the sound of hurrying footsteps fell upon their ears. In another minute several excited men were by their side, examining the wounded man and asking numerous questions. Jess

rose to her feet and stepped back. As she did so someone touched her lightly on the arm, and whispered her name. Turning swiftly around, she came face to face with the driver of the car who had interviewed Captain Tobin outside the store that very morning.

"John!" It was all that she said, but the flush upon her face, and the light of joy which leaped into her eyes were more expressive than many words.

"How did you get here so soon?" the young man asked. "This is no place for you, Jess. Let me take you back to the boat."

"No, no," was the low reply. "We must look after this poor man first. Oh, do what you can for him at once."

For a few seconds the young man looked into the eyes of the girl before him. The great longing of his heart was expressed in that look, and the girl understood. She turned toward the injured man, and absently watched his companions doing what they could for his welfare. Into her heart stole a peace such as she had not known for days. The one she loved was with her, and she knew that he loved her with all the strength of his true manly nature. Forgotten for a time were Donaster and her other persecutors. In this rough wilderness spot she felt secure from their grasp, and with John Hampton near she was ready and willing to defy the whole world.

The brief scene enacted between the young lovers was not noticed by the men earnestly discussing what should be done with their battered comrade. The accident alone so arrested and held their attention that the thought of love-making at such a critical situation never once occurred to them.

With Eben, however, it was different. He saw and understood far too much for his peace of mind. In an instant he grasped the meaning of the whispered words

and the expression upon the faces of the lovers. A feeling such as he had never before known leaped into his heart. He forgot all about the injured man, and paid no attention to what was being done with him. He could think only of himself, and how another had come between him and the girl he loved. He knew John Hampton well, and it came as a great surprise that he should be on such friendly terms with Jess Randall.

In a few minutes the helpless man was lifted carefully from the ground, and borne gently away on a rude stretcher which had been speedily improvised by his comrades. Jess and John followed, talking with each other, though so low that Eben could not understand what they were saying. As they moved forward, he skulked a short distance behind. The girl paid no attention to him now. In fact, she did not seem to be even aware of his presence. She was taken up entirely with the young man by her side, so the idea that she meant anything to the awkward youth to the rear never once crossed her mind.

In about fifteen minutes the injured man's house was reached, and all entered except Eben. It was merely a shack, almost surrounded by trees, and situated a short distance from the main highway. Here Bill Dobbins and his wife lived during the summer months while work was being carried on in the granite quarry. Their real home was elsewhere, so this rude structure was all that they required during their temporary stay at the quarry.

Eben waited for a few minutes outside, uncertain what to do. At length he turned and made his way slowly back to the road, and down the track to the river. He said nothing to his father about the accident, and turned into his bunk at an unusually early hour. When the captain asked him about the girl, and if Mrs. Ricksteen had taken her in, Eben was curt in his reply,

saying that he did not know. Not until the next morning did Captain Tobin hear about the accident, for he had been in the cabin when it had occurred. He then questioned his son as to the details, but received no satisfactory information. Later he learned of the whole affair from two men from the quarry, when they ran their first morning load of granite down to the river. The injured man was still unconscious, so they told him. The doctor had arrived during the night, and did what he could for his welfare. The men were loud in their praises of the young woman who had sat up all night with Mrs. Dobbins, and had made herself so agreeable and helpful.

"I guess she's there to stay," one of them remarked. "Wonder where in the world she dropped from. Ye don't see the likes of her every day, 'specially in a place like this."

"She and young Hampton seem to be very thick," the other volunteered. "They must have known each other before by the look of things."

"Hampton, did ye say?" the captain asked. "D'ye mean Widder Hampton's son, of Beech Cove?"

"I don't know whose son he is," was the reply. "He arrived at the quarry yesterday afternoon, and has been hanging around ever since. Mebbe he planned to meet the girl here."

The captain made no reply but went on with his work. He thought, however, of the interview he had with Hampton down the river the day before, and he smiled to himself. He understood now why the young fellow was so interested in the fair passenger on board the "Eb and Flo," and for his sake, no doubt, the girl had run away from home.

Eben worked so hard all the morning that his father was greatly surprised. He had heard what the men said about Hampton and the girl, and it was necessary for him to do something to give vent to his intensely

wrought-up feelings. He worked with a feverish energy, and seemed to possess the strength of two men as he helped at the derrick as the big blocks of granite were swung on board. He hardly touched his noon-day meal, and this caused his father considerable anxiety, for the boy had been always blessed with an excellent appetite.

All through the afternoon the work of loading the boat was continued, and such excellent progress was made that the captain was looking forward to sailing early the next morning. To all outward appearance Eben's mind was entirely upon the big stones which were being hoisted on board. But anyone watching closely might have noticed that occasionally he gave a keen, furtive glance up toward the quarry.

The day was fast wearing to its close, and the last block of stone was about to be moved, when Eben gave one of his quick looks up the hill. As he did so he suddenly straightened himself up and stared as if he had seen a ghost. His face became suddenly pale, and his hands trembled as he watched two people walking slowly down the track. He recognised them at once, and it was their appearance he had been expecting all the afternoon. He knew that they were coming to the boat, and he did not wish to meet the girl when Hampton was present. He felt that he could not trust himself, so great was his agitation.

Without a word to anyone Eben left the wharf, walked a few yards along the river, and disappeared among some bushes. He soon stopped when he was sure that he could not be seen, crouched low upon the ground, and watched all that was taking place near the "Eb and Flo." He could see John and the girl talking with the captain for a few minutes, after which the three went on board and entered the cabin. When they reappeared about fifteen minutes later, Hampton was carrying a small parcel in his hand, which Eben surmised contained

the articles his father had purchased for Jess at the store. When once again upon the wharf, they stood and talked for a few minutes. What they said Eben could not make out, but presently he heard his father calling his name. This caused him to crouch lower upon the ground, fearful lest he should be observed. One of the quarrymen then spoke and motioned his hand in the direction the boy had gone. Eben heard the amused laughter which followed, and he fully comprehended its meaning. They were laughing at him for running away! It was almost more than he could endure, and his first impulse was to rush from his hiding place, challenge John Hampton for a fight, and show Jess that he was no coward. But a natural diffidence restrained him, which caused him to remain silent and unseen. It was only when he was certain that the visitors were well out of sight, did he venture back to the wharf. His father looked at him somewhat curiously, but was wise enough to ask no questions.

When darkness had settled over the land, Eben left the boat and made his way slowly up the track. Reaching the main highway, he moved forward with a long jerky stride until he came to the little clearing where the Dobbins' shack was situated. He stopped and peered cautiously around. A light shone from the one window facing the road, and toward this Eben stealthily moved. There was no blind to the window, so when near enough he could easily see all that was taking place within. The sight that met his first glance stirred him to a high pitch of angry jealousy. He saw the two sitting close to each other but a short distance from the injured man, who was lying upon a cot. John was talking to Jess in a most earnest manner, and the look upon the girl's face was one of intense happiness. She was evidently pleased at what her lover was saying, for occasionally her lips parted in a smile.

All this Eben saw in the few minutes that he stood there. His hands were clenched hard, and his eyes were filled with the fire of hatred. There was the man who had come between him and the girl he loved. He was but a short distance away, so acting upon the wild impulse of the instant he stooped down, and finding a stone lying right at his feet, he took careful aim, and hurled it with his full force through the window, straight at the head of his enemy. The sudden crash was followed instantly by a cry of pain, and then all was still. With fast-beating heart Eben looked, expecting to see Hampton stretched upon the floor. Great was his horror to behold the girl lying there instead, her deathly-white face stained with blood. With a startled cry as of a wild beast in agony, he turned and fled along the road, down the track, and back to the refuge of the "Eb and Flo."

CHAPTER IX

MARTHA TAKES A HAND

THROUGHOUT the entire night the horror of a great dread drove all sleep from Eben's eyes. As he lay in his bunk every sound seemed to be magnified, and he imagined that men would come for him and lead him away to trial. He felt quite sure that he had killed Jess and that he would be hung for murder. The girl's white face with the bloodstain upon it was ever before him, and he could not shut it from his mind. And he had murdered her, the one who had meant so much to him! The thought of John Hampton filled his soul with bitterness. He was the cause of all his misery, so he reasoned. Why had not the stone hit him instead of the girl?

Some time before daylight he went out on deck. The cabin was stifling, and he felt that he would smother if he stayed there any longer. He sauntered up forward, and looked out over the water. It was a beautiful night, with a gentle wind drifting in from the west. The accustomed sounds of darkness fell upon his ears, but he paid no attention to them now. His mind was not in tune with nature's sweet harmonies, so she brought no restful peace to his tumultuous brain. He longed to know what was taking place in the little shack in the forest. Was the girl lying there still in death? Would people know who did the deed? How would they find out? He had read about detectives searching for criminals, and following most unexpected clues. Had he left any trace

behind? he wondered. No twinge of conscience troubled his soul. It was only regret that the stone had hit the wrong person. He was sorry for the girl, and for himself. His nature was as clay, full of many possibilities, and capable of being moulded by right methods into a choice vessel. But hitherto no one had understood his peculiar nature. Then when love for a noble woman did at length enter his soul, its influence was quenched by the spirit of hatred and revenge.

Great excitement reigned at the quarry when the men learned of the accident which had befallen Miss Randall. Feeling ran high and had they known the one who committed the deed, it would have gone hard with him. Captain Tobin heard the story when he visited the quarry during the morning. He had been more surprised than ever at Eben's silent and strange manner, especially when he had found him at daybreak at the bow of the boat. He could get nothing from the boy, and in disgust he had left him and ate his breakfast alone. He believed that his son was deeply in love with Jess Randall, and that the presence of John Hampton was the cause of his depression. He imagined that it was but a temporary affection, and nothing would come of it, until he heard of what had happened to the girl. Then a great fear forced itself upon his mind. He banished it at first as improbable. But the more he thought of it, and the more he considered Eben's strange manner, the more he was led to the painful conclusion that his son was the one who had thrown the stone through the window. He was well aware of Eben's impulsive nature, and the extent to which he would go when roused to anger. He overheard two men talking about the affair.

"I'd like to lay my hands on the skunk who threw that stone," declared one. "I'd show him a thing or two. The idea of hitting such a girl as that, an' her watching by Bill."

"Is she badly hurt, d'ye think?" the other asked.

"Can't say. Mrs. Dobbins said she was able to sit up in the car when young Hampton took her away."

"Where did he take her to?"

"To the hospital, I guess. But maybe he took her to his own home. His mother lives down the river somewhere, so I understand."

The captain breathed more freely when he learned that the girl was able to travel in the car. At first he feared that she had been so badly injured that she might die. Then the guilty one would surely be found, and if it proved to be his own son how terrible it would be. Even now should suspicion rest upon Eben the quarrymen might prove very troublesome. He, therefore, decided to get away as soon as possible. He did not wish to shield his son if he were in the wrong. But he wanted him to receive a fair trial, if the matter went that far, and not have him dealt with by a number of excited men who might let their passions get the upper hand.

Shortly after noon the "Eb and Flo" slipped from her wharf, and headed downstream. The tide was fair, and the light breeze was favourable for a long tack out of the narrow channel into the main river below Spoon Island. The captain was at the wheel, with Eben by his side, ready for any orders which might be given. Very few words had passed between father and son during the day, and to all outward appearance they seemed like complete strangers. But the captain's mind had been busy upon more than his boat. He felt it was his duty to speak to Eben and find out if he did really throw the stone which hit the girl. Several times he was on the point of mentioning the subject, but always hesitated. It was a delicate matter, he well knew, and for the first time in his life he was at a loss for words. At length, however, he brought his courage to what he thought was the sticking point.

"Say, Eben," he began. Then he paused, and looked helplessly around.

"What is it, dad?"

"D'ye think it's goin' to blow hard to-day?"

"Mebbe it will, an' mebbe it won't."

The captain gave the wheel a slight turn, and ran a little closer to the island.

"Eben."

The boy looked curiously at his father.

"D'ye s'pose yer mother'll be waitin' fer us?"

"Most likely."

The captain shifted uneasily, and clutched the wheel with a firmer grip.

"Say, Eben, it was too bad that gal got hurt last night, wasn't it?"

The boy started, and gave his father a quick look. Then his eyes dropped.

"What girl, dad? Ye never told me about it."

"But don't ye know, Eben?"

"Know what?"

"Quit yer nonsense. Didn't ye hear about that gal who came up river with us gittin' hurt?"

"Naw, never heard a word."

"Ye didn't!" The captain stared at his son. Surely, he thought, the boy is not adding a lie to his misdeed.

"I ain't seen anybody this mornin' but you, dad," Eben explained. "How could I hear anything?"

"Sure, sure, I guess yer right. But I did think mebbe ye'd thrown that stone. I'm mighty glad to learn that ye know nuthin' about it."

"I didn't say I know nuthin'. Ye didn't ask me that."

"Didn't I? Why, I thought I spoke plain enough."

"Oh, shucks! Ye jist asked me if I had heard about it, which I didn't. Nobody told me, but I know jist the same. I threw that stone."

There was an expression of defiance upon the boy's face, and his eyes were blazing. He partly expected his father to swing upon him with strong words of reproof. In this, however, he was mistaken. The captain remained very quiet for a few minutes, which seemed to Eben much longer. At last he turned and looked at his son. His rough, knotted hands trembled on the wheel, and his eyes were misty. Eben never saw him look at him in such a way before. Had he stormed and raged it would have but increased his defiance. But that look of silent reproach smote his very soul, causing him to cower conscience stricken. Without a word, he left his father's side and went forward. And there he stood with his hands behind his back, staring straight before him. The captain watched him anxiously. His mind was greatly confused over the confession he had just heard. What would Martha and Flo say when they heard of it? The family would be disgraced, for the neighbours up and down the river would learn the truth sooner or later. What should he do? Would it be right to shield his son? The perspiration stood out in beads upon his forehead, and a groan escaped his lips. Then almost unconsciously he began to sing his old favourite verse:

"Here I'll raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy grace I'll come,
And I trust in Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home."

"Seems to me," he mused, "that I've been tryin' to raise Eben without considerin' enough the great Stone of help. I've heard the parson say that's the meanin' of Ebenezer, and that the stone refers to the Lord. Yes, I guess I need His help more'n ever jist now."

The "Eb and Flow" made slow progress down river, for the wind was light, and it was necessary to beat most of the way. It was, accordingly, evening when at last

she ran slowly into Beech Cove and dropped anchor. The captain's mind was worried about the reception he would receive, for he knew how angry his wife would be over his strange action on the up trip. He was at a loss to explain, for he could not bring himself to the extremity of telling a falsehood. He was thinking seriously of this when his wife appeared on the shore. She immediately launched a small row-boat and headed for the "Eb and Flo." The captain received her as graciously as possible, although he knew at the first glance that his entire stock of affableness could not dispel the threatening clouds.

"Well, Sam'l," Mrs. Tobin began, the instant she stepped upon the deck, "what have you got to say for yourself?"

"Nuthin', Martha, nuthin', 'cept I'm mighty glad to see ye."

"H'm, don't ye lie to me, Sam'l. Ye must be mighty glad to see me. Why did ye go by on your up trip without stopping?"

"I was in a great hurry, Martha, an' had to git the wind when it served. We was hung up a long time down river."

"But ye never did such a thing before. Was there any special reason why ye didn't call just for a few minutes?"

Mrs. Tobin was a buxom, matronly-looking woman, with a usually bright, pleasant face. But now it was stern, and her dark eyes were filled with anger as she noted her husband's silence and confusion. Presently she turned to her son who was standing near.

"What have you to say, Eben? Your father seems to have lost his tongue all of a sudden. What have you two been doing?"

If his mother had asked him such a question that morning he would not have hesitated about telling the truth. But the thought of the expression upon his

father's face when he had told about throwing the stone, deterred him. He looked at his mother uncertain what to say.

"Have you lost your tongue, too?" she impatiently demanded. "Dear me, there must be something wrong when you too are afraid or ashamed to speak. Things have come to a pretty pass, Sam'l, when you an' Eben conspire against me. Haven't I cooked for you, washed and mended your clothes all these years, and been a good wife to you, Sam'l?"

"Indeed ye have, Martha. Ye've done yer duty, all right."

"An' haven't I been a good mother to your children?"

"Sure, sure, ye have, Martha. Ye done yer duty to them, too."

"Well, then, Sam'l, why is it that you've treated me in such a manner? Why have you set my only son against me?"

"I haven't set him aginst ye, Martha. Eben's got a tongue which he's at liberty to use. I s'pose he knows it's no use to speak, fer if ye won't believe me ye won't believe him, so thar. Ye needn't git on yer high-horse about nuthin'."

Mrs. Tobin looked at her husband in surprise, for seldom had he ever spoken to her in such a manner.

"And you've done nothing wrong?" she asked. "Are you sure?"

"No, we ain't done nuthin' wrong 'ccordin' to our way of thinkin'. We sailed by without stoppin', I acknowledge. But is that any crime? Bizness is bizness an' must be attended to."

Captain Tobin felt quite pleased at his own boldness, and for his victory over his wife. He had no idea that she would calm down so soon. Had he made a mistake in always giving in to her? he asked himself. Perhaps

if he had been a little more assertive it might have been better for his welfare.

"I suppose the cabin's in a terrible mess." His wife's words suddenly aroused him.

"No, no, Martha, it's in great shape," he hastened to assure her. "I scrubbed the floor meself when we was held up down river."

"Then it must be in great shape, Sam'l. I've seen your scrubbing before. I'm going to have a look, anyway. No doubt there are some dirty clothes to take home. I suppose you didn't wash them."

Mrs. Tobin made her way to the cabin, and down the narrow stairway, closely followed by the captain and Eben.

"It smells close here, Sam'l," she commented, as she stood in the centre of the room and looked critically around. "You should have more ventilation. It isn't healthy. I have often——"

She paused abruptly as her eyes rested upon a narrow shelf on which a little clock was steadily ticking. Stepping quickly forward, she reached out her right hand, seized something and held it forth. It was a woman's innocent side-comb, but to the captain and his son it appeared more terrible than the most dangerous bomb. They stared as if they had never beheld such a thing before. Mrs. Tobin watched them as she gripped the comb in her hand. Her eyes blazed with anger as she glowered upon the two abashed ones before her. The captain clutched his handkerchief and mopped his hot brow. Then he looked helplessly around. He longed to escape, to flee anywhere from his wife's accusing eyes.

"Where did this come from?" The words fell slowly from Mrs. Tobin's lips, and to the two culprits they sounded like the knell of doom. She waited for some response, but none came. "Is it possible that you have

had a woman in this cabin," she continued. "Can you deny it, Sam'l Tobin?"

The captain clawed nervously at the back of his head with the fingers of his right hand, and then glanced up the stairway. The gleam of triumph shone in his wife's eyes as she noted his embarrassment.

"You can't deny it, Sam'l," she charged, at the same time pointing an accusing finger straight at his face. "I can read you like a book. You've had a woman on board, and this is her comb. You can't deny it."

"It'd be no use, Martha," the captain replied. "Ye wouldn't believe me if I did."

"No, not in the face of this," and Mrs. Tobin again held forth the comb.

"Well, then, Martha, what's the use of so much talk? I've had a hard day, so am tired an' hungry. Guess Eben is, too."

"Tired! Hungry!" Mrs. Tobin snapped. "You'll be more tired and hungry before I'm through with you, let me tell you that. You might as well own up first as last about that woman you had on board. Who is the miserable hussy, and where is she now?"

A gleam of hope suddenly appeared in the captain's eyes, and he shot a swift glance toward his son.

"We had no miserable hussy on board, Martha," he replied. "That's the Gospel truth, so if ye don't believe it, ye needn't."

"I'm afraid you're lying, Sam'l. If you didn't have a woman on board, where, then, did this comb come from?"

"Blamed if I know. How d'ye expect me to keep track of sich gear?"

Mrs. Tobin gave a sigh of despair as she turned to her son.

"Is your father telling the truth, Eben?" she asked.

"Yes, ma."

"And you had no bad, miserable hussy on board this boat?"

"No, ma, we didn't."

"And you haven't been doing anything wrong, anything that you're ashamed of?"

Eben's face suddenly coloured, and his eyes dropped. He remembered what he had done at the quarry. Mrs. Tobin was now convinced that she was being deceived, and that her husband and son were in league against her. She wheeled upon the captain.

"I want you to come right home with me, Sam'l. This is a very serious matter, and I need Flo's advice. She's got a level head, and will know what had better be done. I can hardly think, I'm so worked up."

"But you kin talk all right, Martha, even if ye can't think," the captain retorted. "If ye'd think more ye'd talk less. If ye don't believe what me an' Eben have said, ye needn't. Yes, I'll go home with ye, fer I guess Flo'll understand, if you don't. Eben, you look after things here. Ye might as well keep the sail up as thar's no wind. If it comes on to blow, ye can lower it. I'll be on hand bright an' early in the mornin' so's to catch the tide. We kin drift, even if thar's no wind. Come on, Martha, let's go."

CHAPTER X

UNWELCOME VISITORS

AFTER he had eaten his supper, Eben washed his few dishes and went out on deck. He sat down upon one of the blocks of granite and looked out over the water. It was a beautiful evening, with not a breath of wind astir. The river shimmered like a great mirror, its surface only ruffled when an occasional motor-boat hurried by, and the little steamer "Oconee," on her regular evening trip from the city, ploughed past and blew for a wharf a short distance beyond. A noble river is the St. John, enwrapped with the halo of romance and deeds of daring. In days long ago it bore upon its bosom the light canoes of Indians as they journeyed to and fro for trading or warlike purposes. It felt the surge of larger vessels, both of England and France, during the stirring days when those two nations contended for the supremacy of a virgin land. Later it saw the slow-creeping boats of hardy pioneers, Loyalists, who came to make for themselves homes in the wilderness. Its shores re-echoed to the shouts and songs of sturdy raftsmen in the days when acres of great logs were floated down to the sea. It had cradled upon its bosom fleets of boats, their white sails swelling to every wind that blew. These were gradually replaced by noisy steamers and tugs until only a few remained, of which the "Eb and Flo" was one.

To an imaginative mind the history of such a river would be sufficient to thrill the soul. But to the youth

sitting there alone upon deck it meant nothing. In fact, he did not notice the beauty of the evening, nor the soft calmness which surrounded him. His mind was upon other things. He was thinking of the scene which had just been enacted on board the boat. He was in a rebellious mood, and now, as often before, quietness and deep thought were his two choice friends. He glanced occasionally toward the shore and up to the little cottage nestling among the trees. It was his home, and yet he had little affection for the place. It was there he had received food and shelter nearly all his life, but no sweet memories clustered around that little house. He had always been misunderstood, and he could not recall the time when he had not been scolded for everything he did. His mother was a woman who did her duty according to her light, and looked well after the bodily welfare of her family. But she overlooked the fact that people need more than bread and clothing, and that eternal scrubbing, washing and dusting do not make a real home. For the first time in his life he felt a deep pity for his father as he thought of the stern inquisition he was no doubt undergoing. And Flo, too, would have much to say, for her mother had moulded her according to her own design.

"Poor dad must be having a lively time of it now," he mused. "I wish he'd show a little more spunk, an' stand up fer his rights. Ma an' Flo'd think more of him if he did. I don't believe all women act that way. I wonder——?"

His thoughts trailed off to the one girl who had ever stirred his soul. How different she was from his own sister, he thought. He felt quite sure that she would not always be finding fault with everything he did. His eyes glowed with a new light, and his heart beat faster as he remembered how interested she had been in his drawings. Then his feelings underwent a swift change.

He was nothing to her. She never once thought of him after she met Hampton at the quarry. And he had struck her instead of his enemy! Would she ever learn the truth? he wondered.

A low rumble of thunder in the distance aroused him. He looked off toward the right. The sun had gone down, and big black clouds were massing in the distance and rolling up from the west. The thunder was becoming more audible, while flashes of lightning were already splitting the air. He was well accustomed to such storms, which at times came up suddenly after a day of intense heat. They were generally accompanied by a heavy wind, and he remembered how twice that very summer the "Eb and Flo" had dragged her anchor when hit by a furious gale. The first time she had drifted out into the main channel, and they only had time to hoist sail and get her under way. On the second occasion she had gone ashore, and barely escaped a pile of rocks. Fortunately it had been low tide, so when the water rose, a passing tug had pulled her off, undamaged. The anchor was too small, and his father had often spoken about getting a larger one. But this he had neglected to do, principally because of the expense. Had there been good anchorage at Beach Cove, Eben would have felt more at ease. But he knew that the bottom here was gravelly and would afford but a poor hold for the best of anchors. A louder rumble of thunder fell upon his ears.

"It'll soon be here," he muttered. "Guess I'd better lower the sail. It won't do to have it up when the squall strikes."

He rose to his feet and was making his way across the pile of stones, when a motor-boat sputtered near, and slowed down close alongside. There were two men on board, one steering, and the other at the engine.

"Is this the 'Eb and Flo'?" the former asked.

"Guess so," was the reply. "What d'ye want?"

At once the motor-boat was made fast to the deck-rail, and the two men climbed on board. Such liberty was not at all pleasing to Eben. His fists doubled and his eyes expressed anger. He recognised one of the visitors as Donaster, the man from whom Jess Randall had fled. He did not like the look upon his face nor his insolent manner. What right had these men to come on board the "Eb and Flo"? he asked himself. He felt in a fighting mood, but he realised that he could do little, for Donaster's companion was a big burly fellow, of the fighting type. All this passed quickly through his mind as he stepped back and waited to see what the men would do. He did not have many seconds to wait, for Donaster, after peering keenly around as if expecting to see someone else, turned impatiently toward Eben.

"Have you a young woman on this boat?" he asked.

"S'pose I have, what bizness is it of yours?" Eben retorted, now more angry than ever.

"You'll know d—— quick whether it's my business or not if you don't answer my questions."

"I don't have to. This boat's me own, an' I kin have anyone I like on board. You clear out of this."

"Don't get insolent, you young cuss. Keep a civil tongue in your mouth or it won't be well for you. I want to know if you have a young woman on board?"

Eben did some quick, hard thinking just then. A spirit of natural shrewdness came to his assistance, and a sudden idea flashed into his mind. He could not fight these men single-handed, and win. He must get them at a special disadvantage, and there was only one way in which this could be accomplished. He thought of the cabin.

"S'pose I have a woman on board, what of it?" he asked.

"We want her; that's all."

"Well, then, ye'll have to find her yerselves. Don't frighten her," and he motioned aft.

"What! In the cabin?" Donaster was much excited now.

Eben merely nodded, and stepped back.

"Come on, Bill," Donaster ordered. "I suspected she was here."

So intent were the two men upon their search that they paid no more heed to Eben, but hurried at once toward the cabin. Had they been the least suspicious and glanced back, they might have been more cautious. They would have seen the young man they despised as of no account following, his face clouded with anger, and bearing in his hands a stout stick he had picked up from the deck. But sure of themselves, the visitors reached the cabin and descended. No sooner had their heads disappeared below the hatchway than Eben leaped forward, and stood menacingly on guard above. In his hands he clutched the stick and waited. He heard the men groping around below.

"It's as dark as h—— down here," Donaster was saying. "Hustle on deck, Bill, and fetch that fool down to give us a light."

The man at once obeyed, but no sooner had he placed his right foot upon the bottom step than a roar of warning greeted him from above. It was Eben's voice, and there was no doubting its meaning.

"Come up an' I'll brain ye," he roared.

Instinctively Bill drew back, while an exclamation of annoyance and fear escaped his lips. In the twilight of evening he could see the threatening lad above and the uplifted stick.

"Here, none of that, you fool," he cried. "What's your idea?"

"Come up an' I'll show ye. But I guess ye'll stay

there all right. Mebbe I'm not sich a fool as ye think. Ye know now who owns this boat, don't ye?''

The men were in a trap, and knew it. They were very angry and threatened and cursed in the most violent manner. But the more they raved, the more satisfied Eben became. It was rare sport, and he was enjoying it. But he was determined for all that, and if the men had ventured up the stairway he certainly would have knocked them down.

The peals of thunder were now becoming louder and more frequent. The intense calmness was ominous of the coming storm. Eben glanced uneasily toward the west and then forward. He knew that the sail should be down, but he did not dare to leave his post even for a minute. The men were whispering to each other. What they said he could not make out, but presently he heard the scratching of a match, and a light flared up. They were searching for a lamp, which they soon found and lighted. He knew that they could only escape from their prison by means of the door, for his father had built the upper part of the cabin exceptionally strong to keep out thieves when the boat was lying at her wharf in the harbour.

A vivid flash of lightning rent the air, followed almost immediately by a tremendous crash of thunder. From the cabin came a howl of fear, and looking down Eben could see two frightened faces staring up at him.

''For God's sake, let us up out of this hole!'' Donaster pleaded. ''We'll smother here.''

''Jist stay where ye are,'' was the reply. ''Ye got yerselves into this fix, an' ye'll have to make the best of it.''

''But the lightning might strike the boat,'' Donaster argued.

''It would serve you divils right if it did. But, heavens, the storm's upon us!''

He slammed to the cabin door, and securely bolted it.

He next leaped across the deck-load and tore loose the halliard. Instantly the sail came down with a rush, the gaff striking the boom with a bang. Across the hills came the storm. It could be heard a mile or more away, and in a few minutes the first drops of rain pattered upon the deck. Eben struggled to gather together the sail as it flopped in the first fitful gusts of wind and make it secure. But before this could be accomplished the storm was upon him. The thunder was terrific and the lightning incessant. The rain descended in torrents, and the wind whipping across the deck, caught the half furled sail and drove the boom with a thud to the full length of its sheet. In a few minutes Eben was soaked to the skin as he leaned against the mast for support. But he thought little of himself. His only concern was for the "Eb and Flo" as she reeled beneath the storm and strained heavily at her anchor.

CHAPTER XI

IN PERIL OF DEATH

THE storm which raged with unabated fury for a full half hour was one of the severest ever experienced on the St. John River. Hail mingled with the rain, and did considerable damage to the crops which happened to be caught in its on-rushing sweep. Trees were blown down, as well as several buildings, and in a number of farm houses the glass in the windows was broken by the fury of the driving hail.

While the storm was at its height, Eben sought shelter in the lee of the cabin. This afforded him some protection, and from here he watched anxiously to see how the boat would bear herself. During vivid flashes of lightning the whole country around became illuminated, and he glanced occasionally toward the shore upon his right. He had never been afraid of a thunder storm, so it did not affect him now. In fact, he rather enjoyed it, for it harmonised with the state of his mind. If only the anchor would hold; that was his sole concern. He thought of his prisoners within the cabin, and chuckled. He knew what a noise the hail was making upon the roof, and he could hear the men pounding at times upon the door and begging to be released.

Another quivering flash, followed instantly by a more terrific roar of thunder, told Eben that something had been hit not far away. He caught a glimpse of the trees along the shore and then all was dark. But that fleeting vision was enough to cause him to straighten

suddenly up. The "Eb and Flo" was drifting before the wind! Another flash showed that she was making fast for the main channel, and something had to be done at once to save her. It was high tide now, he was well aware, and should the boat, heavily loaded as she was, ground on the soft marshy flats across the river, it would be next to impossible to get her off again. Apart from the valuable cargo, the loss during the busy carrying season would mean much. He must get the boat under steerage way, and head her down stream.

It took him but a second to reach the cabin door and tear it open. A bright flash showed him two white faces at the bottom of the stairs.

"Hustle up here, an' give a hand," he ordered.

"W-what's wrong?" Donaster asked, shaking with fear.

"Never mind what's wrong. I ain't got time to explain. Git a move on."

The men at once obeyed, scrambled up the steps, and tumbled on deck.

"Come on," Eben commanded. "Follow me."

This, however, was no easy thing to do, for the two men found it most difficult to make their way across the blocks of stone. The lightning blinded and dazed them so much that they often stumbled and fell, so by the time they reached their guide who was standing by the halliard, their bodies were bruised in a number of places.

"Lay hold on this rope," Eben ordered. "We've got to hist the sail or this boat'll be aground. Now, pull fer all yer worth."

Without a word the two men did as they were bidden, and as the sail slowly rose it flapped wildly in the wind, and threatened to tear itself loose from the yards. Fortunately at this critical moment the wind lulled for a brief spell, which enabled them to accomplish the task, and make the halliard fast.

"Now come over here," Eben again commanded. "I want ye to look after the sheet-line." He darted across the deck, the men following him as fast as possible. "Look after this rope," he continued, "an' do jist as I say." He then sprang aft, and laid hold of the wheel.

Although this had taken but a short time the "Eb and Flo" had already drifted into the main channel and in a few minutes she would have been aground on the opposite shore. A quick turn of the wheel caused the boat to fall off to the left, and presently she was under way, headed down the river. And not an instant too soon, for scudding through the rough water she cleared by only a few yards the edge of the soft ground. With sail hauled closer than was safe, she sped forward and at length reached a wider stretch of water. Eben breathed a deep sigh of relief when the danger was past, and he steered the boat a little more to the left. The two men at the sheet obeyed his every command, and he smiled to himself as he remembered how high and mighty they had been when they boarded the boat that evening.

The storm was now rolling away to the east, and the wind was lessening. But still there was a fine sailing breeze, so by exercising special care, Eben was able to make good progress as he beat from side to side of the river. He was well acquainted with the course, and he was greatly helped by the steady gleam of a lighthouse ahead. He made up his mind to keep on sailing all night, and thus reach the city early the next morning. If the wind held firm, he knew that he could run on longer tacks where the river was wider in the lower part of the Reach and in Grand Bay. He was certain that his father would be very anxious in the morning when he found that the "Eb and Flo" had disappeared. But he would show the folks at home that he could be depended upon, and could handle the boat in an emergency. He would go to the city, discharge his cargo and return in triumph

to Beech Cove. Just what to do with his passengers he was not sure. At first he felt inclined to report them to the police. But upon second thought, he decided to let them go. But for their assistance he would not have been able to save the boat, and he was somewhat grateful to them now. In fact, he felt quite friendly with his visitors.

"How d'ye feel?" he at length called out, just after he had taken another tack for a long run across the river.

"Wet to the skin," Donaster angrily replied. "When are we to let up on this job? I'm sick of it."

"Same here," his companion agreed.

"Well, I guess ye'll have to make the best of it, me hearties. We'll reach the city early in the mornin', if the wind holds. Ye kin change yer clothes then."

The men made no reply, but Donaster, leaving Bill to manage the sheet, scrambled over to Eben's side.

"My, it's confoundedly dark and nasty to-night," he growled. "It's absolutely beastly."

"Don't like it much, eh?" Eben queried. "Ye got more'n ye expected, didn't ye?"

"Should say I did. But I thought you had Miss Randall on board. Where in h—— is she, anyway? You know, don't you?"

"So it's her ye was lookin' fer, was it?"

"Certainly. Didn't I tell you so?"

"No, ye didn't. Ye only asked me if I had a woman on board."

"Oh, well, you understood all right, so you needn't make believe you didn't. You knew I was looking for Miss Randall."

"But she's dead, isn't she?"

"Dead! When did she die?"

"Why, they was searchin' fer her body down river."

Donaster laughed, and reaching out laid his hand upon Eben's arm.

"Say, stop your fooling, will you? Miss Randall's not dead. She ran away, and came on board this boat. Own up now, like a good fellow."

"What did she run away fer?"

"Because she doesn't want to marry me. She's acted very foolishly, and I'm bound that she shan't escape. I shall find her, no matter where she is."

"Did she promise she'd marry ye?"

"No, she never did. But her parents said I could have her."

"She doesn't love ye, then?"

"Love, be d——! What do I care about love? There's no such a thing as love. It's the girl I want. Love has nothing to do with it."

Eben made no reply. His attention was taken up with bringing the boat around for a short starboard tack, and in giving orders to Bill. When she was running steadily once more, his mind reverted to what he had just heard. So the girl had thrown over Donaster, too, he mused, the same as she had treated him at the quarry. He felt a certain degree of sympathy for the man. Why should he not help him, and take her away from Hampton? It would be some satisfaction, for the spirit of revenge was still rankling in his soul. But Donaster didn't love her. He had said that there was no such a thing as love. He knew that the man was wrong, for he himself loved the girl as he had never loved anyone before. She meant everything to him, and his life was bleak and desolate since she had left the boat. Why should Hampton have her?

"Look here, you haven't answered my question." It was Donaster speaking.

"What question?"

"I asked you where Miss Randall is. I am sure you know."

"Yer mistaken, then. I don't know where she is." Eben suddenly remembered the stone he had hurled through the window. He realised that the less he said the better it would be. If he should commit himself in the least degree as to what he knew about Miss Randall, he was certain that Donaster would continue to bother him with no end of questions.

"But surely you must know where she is," the man persisted. "I am positive that she went up river with you on this boat. What became of her after she left you?"

"I told ye I don't know where she is. Ye'll have to go an' find her yerself, if yer so interested in her."

Several times during the night Donaster attempted in vain to wrest the secret from Eben, and his failure made him angry. Lack of sleep, his wet clothes, and the stubbornness of the boy annoyed him. But he could do nothing, so at length, giving up in despair, he went down into the cabin, and lighted a fire in the little stove, for he was very chilly. And there he crouched, leaving the work of looking after the sail to his companion. Selfishness bulked large in his nature, and this was never more apparent than now. His own comfort was the first consideration, no matter how much others might suffer.

After midnight the last clouds rolled away and the stars appeared. The gale subsided to a fair sailing breeze, and the "Eb and Flo" ploughed steadily on her way. Eben was tired as he stood hour after hour at the wheel, and he knew from the motion of the man tending the sail that he too was weary. There was nothing else, however, for them to do, and so without a word of complaint each kept at his task.

Dawn found them at the entrance to Grand Bay, the largest body of water in the entire river. From here

a long close-hauled tack would bring them to the Narrows, a rocky gorge-like formation leading to the noted Reversible Falls below. The tide now was running down, and this greatly aided the boat in her onward sweep. Far away in the east the sky rapidly reddened, and the light of a new day was dispelling the shades of night. Eben's heart caught the glow of the rising sun, and a spirit of elation possessed him. He had brought the boat in safety this far, and in another hour he hoped to have her tied up at one of the wharves, ready to slip through the falls when the tide served.

Just before entering the Narrows, Eben called Donaster up from the cabin. He had to shout several times before he received any response, for the man had fallen asleep in his chair. He stumbled sleepily on deck and looked around.

"Why, we're almost to the city!" he exclaimed.

"Sure. Ye didn't imagine we was tied up to a tree, did ye?"

Donaster walked to the side of the boat and looked over.

"I forgot all about the motor-boat last night," he remarked. "But I see it hung fast all right."

"An' a wonder it did," Eben replied. "The rope must have been a good one. It held better'n the anchor. Guess it's gone fer sure."

"Chain break?" Donaster queried.

"Something's gone, that's certain. We're not draggin' the anchor, anyway. We couldn't git this fer with the anchor towin' below. It would have caught in something or other an' brought us up if it had been there. But it ain't there. The chain must have snapped an' let the boat go adrift. It broke once before an' dad fixed it with a piece of wire. Now we've got to buy a new anchor, an' mebbe a new chain. It doesn't pay to botch things, does it?"

Donaster made no reply, but stood looking straight before him. He had not heard Eben's words, for his mind was upon matters of more importance to him than an old chain and anchor. They were gliding down the Narrows now, the wind and current bearing them rapidly along. They had reached the first turn and had swung sharply to the left, when the first glimpse of the city appeared to view. In another quarter of an hour they hoped to be at one of the wharves, and the boat tied up.

The current was much swifter now, and Eben was becoming anxious. He knew the danger of the place, and hitherto his father had always piloted the "Eb and Flo" through the Narrows. If the breeze would only hold, he could easily make the wharf. Should it fail, there would be serious trouble as the current would bear them rapidly down to the falls. But so far the wind served, and the boat sped steadily forward. A few minutes more and the wharf would be reached. Eben felt quite safe now, and the anxious expression disappeared from his face.

But such was not to be, for in a twinkling the wind died down, and the sail hung limp and useless. With a startled cry, Eben gave the wheel a rapid turn and headed the boat for the shore, hoping thus to escape from the racing current into slower water to the left. But the "Eb and Flo" was in the grip of a stronger master, and swinging partly around, obeyed the current's strong behest. Leaving the now useless wheel, Eben rushed to the side of the boat and lifted up his voice in a series of ringing calls for help. He was heard on shore, and he saw men running to and fro. Several tugs were lying at their wharves, but no smoke issued from their funnels. What was he to do? He looked ahead, and the wild, boiling, leaping waters of the falls seemed terribly near. Instantly he thought of the motorboat. It would save them. But Donaster and his com-

panion had thought of it first and were already on board. The rope was almost untied when Donaster called to him.

"Come with us. This is our only chance. Hustle."

Only for a second did Eben hesitate. He was young and life was dear. But he must not leave. He was in charge of the "Eb and Flo," and no true commander ever deserted his post of duty. He would not be a coward. The engine was already started, and the propeller was churning the water.

"Hurry up," Donaster impatiently ordered.

"I'm not going," was the reply. "Hustle yourselves."

"Are you crazy, boy? It's sure death down there!"

"Can't help it. I'm goin' to stay."

Donaster was about to further insist, when Bill stepped quickly forward, shoved him roughly aside, and tore away the rope from it's fastening.

"Leave the fool if he doesn't want to come," he growled. "We can't waste any more time."

The motor-boat immediately left the "Eb and Flo," and was soon bucking across the current to the left. Eben watched them as if in a dream. He felt now that nothing could save him, for no one could go through the falls at almost low tide, especially on a stone laden boat, and live. The roar of the leaping waters was pounding in his ears, and the boat was moving more rapidly than ever. In a few minutes all hope of rescue would be past, for the tide was now running like a mill-sluice.

Eben was standing near the bow of the boat, his heart beating fast, and his face white as death. How often he had heard his father tell of the boats which had gone through the falls, and those on board had never been heard of again. Great whirlpools below, so it was believed, had sucked down their bodies into vast underground passages. And soon his body would be there!

The thought was appalling, maddening. His eyes were riveted upon the breakers ahead. They fascinated him as they leaped and curled. Their roar sounded like voices of demons, and the dancing spray appeared like long white curving hands reaching out ready to grasp their victim.

Suddenly above the thunder of the waters a hoarse blast rent the air. Eben turned, and as he did so his great gave a great bound, for there but a short distance away was a powerful tug. Where she had come from he did not know. Neither did he care. It was enough for him that she was near, with men standing on the bow with coils of ropes in their hands. They shouted aloud, but he could not understand what was said. The tug was coming across the current, and running a fearful risk in attempting the rescue. Then a rope was flung across the bow of the "Eb and Flo," and in a twinkling Eben was upon it. Never in his life had he pulled so hard and fast, for everything depended upon his efforts now. How long that rope seemed to be. He could hear the shouts of the men on the tug, and they seemed to be words of encouragement. The rope was long, and the warp, for which he was pulling, was dragging heavily in the water. Could he get it aboard? Would he have the strength? These thoughts passed through his mind with lightning rapidity. But still he kept on, and ere long he had the joy of seeing the big hook loom in sight. Then an almost superhuman pull, and the warp was on deck, and securely fastened around the capstan. A shout went up from the tug when this had been accomplished, and Eben staggered back, exhausted by his mighty efforts. He saw the warp suddenly tighten, and felt the "Eb and Flo" swerve to the right. Would the line hold? That was the all-important question now. The strain was terrible, and the rail over which it passed snapped like matchwood. It creaked as it bit into the

deal below, and at times Eben imagined he could see the strands parting. Fortunately it was a new rope and held firm as the tug battled its way against that racing current. Inch by inch it moved, dragging its heavy, helpless burden from the jaws of destruction. There were no shouts now on board the tug, for in the presence of so great a danger and with so much at stake lips were silent.

Eben stood like a statue near the capstan, his eyes fixed upon that straining warp, to him the rope of deliverance. He knew that it was holding, and that the tug was making better headway now. The crisis was past, and in a few minutes he felt sure that he would be safe. Neither was he mistaken, for ere long the tug escaped the deadly current by drawing somewhat to the left. Then from the shore he heard cheers and shouts of excited men who had gathered there. Several blasts from the tug sounded forth as signals of her success, as she triumphantly ploughed her way to a wharf on the right.

Eben could not recall very clearly what happened after that. He heard numerous voices as the boat was being tied up, saw as in a dream men crowding on board, and listened to their questions and words of congratulation. He was dazed by the confusion, and longed to be away by himself that he might think. He was only able to do this, however, when the crowd had departed, and he was left alone upon deck. He had not deserted his post of duty, and a thrill of pleasure swept over him at the thought that he had been true to his trust. Then his mind turned suddenly to Jess Randall. He wondered if she would ever hear of what he had done, and if she did, would she be proud of him?

CHAPTER XII

CORNERED

DONASTER had finished his dinner, and was deep in an evening paper in the smoking-room of the Fundy Hotel. So intent was he upon the article he was reading that he allowed his cigar to go out, a most unusual thing for him. But there was a reason, for he was reading a vivid account of the daring rescue which had been made early that morning on the brink of the falls. It occupied two pages of the paper, describing accurately and in detail all that had taken place. It told of the thunder storm up river, of the breaking loose of the "Eb and Flo," the run to the city, and the noble action of Eben Tobin, who would not desert his post of duty. Donaster breathed more freely when he found that his own name was not mentioned. The paper merely stated that two men had escaped by means of a motor-boat after they had been unable to induce the young commander to go with them. Much praise was given to the men on the tug for the great risk they had run in making the rescue. When he had read the article through for the second time, he laid the paper aside, re-lighted his cigar, and sat for some time in deep thought.

During the whole of this time Gabriel Grimsby had been sitting not far away watching Donaster most intently. He was much better dressed than on the evening he had presented himself before Mrs. Randall and demanded payment for his silence. His face still bore the placid expression of peace and contentment, while his

eyes beamed their goodwill to all. Anyone observing his manner might have mistaken him for a visitant from another world, clothed in human fashion, and mingling for a time in the ways of men. Such was the outward appearance of Gabriel Grimsby, the stand-between.

After a while Donaster rose and made his way into the billiard-room at the rear of the building. He was an expert player, and soon was deeply engaged in his favourite game. Grimsby followed, and for a time stood and watched the game. Then he went back to the smoking-room, resumed his seat, and brought forth a handful of papers from an inside pocket of his coat. Glancing furtively around to see if anyone was watching, he selected a newspaper clipping and read it through very carefully. It told of the mysterious disappearance of Miss Jess Randall, the only daughter of Henry Randall, the noted lumber merchant. It was believed that she had drowned herself near the Randall's summer home along the river, and men were already searching for her body. Grimsby next referred to another article, written a day later, which told of the unsuccessful search for the body of the missing girl. A smile overspread his face as he read this, and he glanced toward the billiard-room. He evidently knew something which was giving him considerable satisfaction. He believed that Donaster would play for some time yet, so there was no hurry.

Slipping the newspaper clipping back into his pocket, Grimsby picked up three letters and read them through. His smile was more pronounced now, and the light of triumph gleamed in his eyes. He felt proud of himself, and his chest slightly expanded with the spirit of importance. "Gabriel Grimsby," he said to himself, "you hold the trump-card all right this time. You may be of no account, but you know a thing or two, and it's up to you to make the most of your knowledge. But, hello! here comes the sucker."

Donaster left the hotel, and went at once to his lodging-place. It was only occasionally that he went to the Fundy for his meals, and this evening was one of them. He could not afford to go often, much as he would have liked to do so. He had to be careful until he had secured Jess Randall, and then he could indulge himself to his heart's content. That he should eventually win her, he had not the slightest doubt. Her father and mother were on his side, so what could a girl do against such a strong combination. After this escapade she would, no doubt, be glad to return and obey their wish. Thus he reasoned as he sat alone in his room that night.

A knock sounded upon the door, and when it was opened Grimsby entered. He greeted Donaster in a free and easy manner, and without waiting for an invitation, sat down and helped himself from a package of cigarettes lying upon the table. Donaster stared at him in amazement, for a minute dumbfounded by such unheard-of impudence. Then he rose to his feet, and angrily approached the visitor.

"Who are you?" he demanded, "and how dare you come here?"

Grimsby smiled, flicked the ashes from his cigarette, and waved his hand.

"Don't be afraid, sir; I won't hurt you. I'm as harmless as a dove."

"H'm, I have no fear of you. I want to know what you mean by your impudence in coming into my room unbidden?"

"Impudence! Impudence, do you say?" and Grimsby assumed a look of astonishment. "Why, I have a special right here. I don't need any invitation."

Donaster stared at the intruder, uncertain whether to class him as a fool or a madman. Grimsby divined his thoughts and his eyes twinkled more than ever.

"Yes," he continued, "duty leads me into many

places, and sometimes I receive rebuffs. But when a man has a great mission, such as mine is, he bears all things patiently. Patience is a great virtue, sir. It is worthy of cultivation."

"What in h—— are you driving at?" Donaster roared. "What has 'mission' and 'patience' to do with your visit here? If you don't explain at once I'll kick you out of the room or have you arrested."

"Go slow, young man, go slow." The smile passed suddenly from Grimsby's face, and his eyes contracted. "I am here on business, special business, and it concerns you. Sit down, and I shall come to the point at once. There, now, keep cool, and do as I say. That's better," he added, when the angry man had reluctantly obeyed. He leaned over and looked Donaster full in the eyes. "You want to marry Miss Randall, do you not?"

Donaster gave a start, and stared at his visitor for a few seconds.

"Well, what business is it of yours if I do?" he demanded. "What right have you to ask such a question? I can attend to my own affairs without any interference from you or anyone else."

"No, ye can't, young man, and that's why I'm here. You can't marry Miss Randall without my assistance. I'm a stand-between, you see, and so have come to your assistance."

Donaster's face suddenly brightened, and he looked keenly at Grimsby.

"Do you know where Miss Randall is?" he eagerly asked.

"Ah, I thought I'd fetch you," and Grimsby smiled. "Do I know where Miss Randall is? Well, we can consider that matter later. I want to know first of all if you want to marry her?"

"Certainly I want to marry her. Do you think I'm a fool?"

"Very good, very good," and Grimsby rubbed his hands, a sure sign of his satisfaction. "That point's settled. But the girl's not agreed, so I understand. Is that so?"

"I'm afraid it is. However, her parents are willing, and they are the main ones."

"Why do they wish you to marry their unwilling daughter?"

"Why? Oh, that's quite clear. They know it will be to her advantage."

"In what way?"

"From a social point of view. As the wife of Lord Donaster's son she will occupy a very high position. She will be received into the best families, and eventually she will be Lady Donaster. You see, I am an only son, so the title will come to me. You can readily understand how anxious her parents are for the consummation of the marriage."

"Certainly, certainly; it is only natural. I suppose you have explained to them your prospects?"

"Yes, I have often talked the matter over with them and they are perfectly satisfied. The title and the social position appeal to them very strongly."

"And in return?" There was a peculiar expression in Grimsby's eyes as he asked the question, which Donaster failed to notice.

"Oh, they have agreed to settle a dowry upon their daughter in consideration of the favours she will receive."

"A large sum, I suppose."

"Yes, quite satisfactory to me. But what has this to do with your visit? There is no reason why I should tell you all this, and I cannot understand myself for doing so. Anyway, it relieves my mind to talk it over with someone."

Grimsby did not at once reply. He helped himself to

another cigarette, lighted it and smoked for a few minutes in silence. Donaster was becoming impatient. He was tired after his experience on the river the night before, and he wished to be rid of his visitor. But he was anxious to know what he wanted. He felt that this man knew where Miss Randall was, and he must find out before he left.

"And so you hope to make Miss Randall Lady Donaster?" Grimsby at length questioned.

"That is my intention. Why do you ask?"

"But what if you never will be Lord Donaster? What then?"

"Why, what do you mean? I shall inherit the title as soon as my father dies."

"But suppose you have no right to the title?"

Donaster gave a distinct start. Then he laughed.

"H'm, you needn't worry about that. Just you wait."

"But suppose you are not Lord Donaster's son?" Grimsby's question was very deliberate, but it had an immediate effect.

"Not his son! What are you driving at, anyway? Stop your nonsense. If I am not Lord Donaster's son, who am I, then?"

"You are an impostor, that's what you are. There is no Lord Donaster. Your father is a shoemaker in the State of New Jersey. I have proof, so you needn't try to deny it."

Donaster had now risen to his feet. He was trembling violently, and his face was as white as death.

"For God's sake!" he gasped, "how did you learn all this? Who are you, anyway?"

"Never mind who I am," and Grimsby smiled with satisfaction. He was succeeding better than he had expected. "You know what I say is true."

"Does anybody else know this?" Donaster asked. "Have you told anyone?"

"Not yet."

"Not yet! Then you intend to do so, I suppose?"

"Why not? Should not Mr. and Mrs. Randall know at once what a vil——, excuse me, what an impostor you are?"

"Don't, don't tell them! For the love of heaven, keep this a secret. They must not know. It will ruin me."

"What am I to do, then?"

"Say nothing. Keep silent."

"Ah, now you are coming to the point. That's why I'm here. Yes, I will keep silent, but what will you pay for my silence. Let's get down to business at once."

"So you want money, eh? How much?"

"That all depends, sir, upon how much you are able to pay."

Donaster looked at Grimsby for a minute without replying. He was angry, and he longed to kick this fellow out of the room. But he knew he had to be cautious if he expected to secure the prize. He must muzzle him somehow until then, otherwise he would spoil his chance completely.

"I am afraid I can pay you but little," he at length confessed. "I am rather hard up myself."

"Oh, that's all right, sir. I'm not hard to please. Let's be partners and divvy up. Give me half of what you have, and I'm at your command. Then, when you get the girl—and the money—you can give me some more." Grimsby's eyes twinkled as he made this suggestion, and he watched to see the effect upon Donaster.

"And you promise that you'll not squeal on me if I do this?"

"Sure. I'll do almost anything for money—like yourself, eh?"

"Do you think you can find the girl?"

"Leave that to me, sir. You came down river on the 'Eb and Flo,' didn't you?"

"How did you hear about that?" Donaster quickly queried.

"H'm, don't ask me how I find out about things. I generally know what's taking place. Eben Tobin's quite a lad, eh?"

"He certainly is. You know him, then?"

"Should say so; ever since he was a baby. Guess he has a pretty good idea where that girl is."

"He told me he didn't."

"Ah, he'd tell you that. But just wait till I get hold of him. You didn't go about it the right way. He's in a class all by himself, Eben is."

"And will you see him?" Donaster was all eagerness now.

"But what about that money? I'm hard up. You can't do much without money these days. It makes people talk when nothing else will. How much can you spare?"

Donaster thought for a few minutes, and his brows wrinkled.

"I've only five hundred in the bank," he at length explained. "You'll have to wait until to-morrow for any of that."

"Five hundred! My, that seems a fortune to me. Where did ye get it? Steal it?"

Donaster shot a quick startled look at his companion as if he would read his mind. Then he gave a nervous laugh.

"Never mind where I got it," he warded. "Don't ask too many questions."

Grimsby leaned across the table and looked keenly at his victim.

"I won't ask any more questions, sir. But I believe you are a bigger rogue than I imagined. It's even neces-

sary for me to be on my guard. How much money have you on hand now?"

"About fifty dollars."

"That's good. I'll take half, according to our agreement."

Donaster hesitated for a few seconds, but at length pulled a roll of bills from his pocket and counted out twenty-five dollars.

"Now, make me out a cheque for half of what you have in the bank," Grimsby ordered as he pocketed the money. "I want to draw it as soon as the bank opens in the morning."

Donaster at first protested, but Grimsby was firm, and threatened what he would do.

"I shall give you just five minutes to do what I wish," he told him. "Otherwise, I shall go at once to Mrs. Randall. Make up your mind, and be quick about it."

Very reluctantly Donaster obeyed, and made out a cheque payable to Gabriel Grimsby. The latter held it in his hand and studied it carefully for a few minutes after he had received it. He smiled as he looked at Donaster. "We are getting along nicely now, are we not? But there is something else I want you to do."

"For heaven's sake! what is it?" Donaster angrily and impatiently asked.

"Give me a piece of paper and a pen: I will write it down."

When these were produced, Grimsby wrote rapidly, Donaster watching him somewhat curiously.

"Listen to this," he ordered when he had finished.

" 'One week after the date of my marriage with Miss Randall I promise to pay Gabriel Grimsby the sum of one thousand dollars for services rendered.' "

"There, how will that suit you?" he asked. "You'll sign that, of course. It's just a little inducement to urge me to greater efforts."

Donaster sat for some time in silence. He seemed to be in deep thought, and his brows knitted with perplexity.

"Do you think you can find Miss Randall?" he at length asked.

"I have no doubt about it," Grimsby replied. "Leave that to me."

"But I want you to do more than find her."

"What do you mean?"

"Yes, you must do more than find her. That will not be enough. You must arrange matters in such a way that she will need help, see?"

"So you will be on hand to rescue her?" Grimsby smiled. He was pleased at himself for his quick intuition.

"That's just it. You must arrange things in such a manner that she will think I am her rescuer from great peril. Then, perhaps, she will look upon me with favour. You see, I am not at all sure of her, even though she should be taken home. I begin to doubt whether her parents will be able to induce her to marry me against her will. Do you think you can help me?"

"Certainly; I have never been stuck yet. Leave it to me. I shall go up river to-morrow, so you hang around here, and when I need you I shall telephone. Have an auto in readiness, and come like the wind when I phone. But you must sign this paper first."

"And you want one thousand dollars? Isn't that a large amount?"

"Large! Why, man, I am astonished at myself for not asking more. Unless you sign this, I shall not assist you."

Seeing that Grimsby was determined, Donaster reluctantly signed the paper and handed it back.

"There, I hope you're satisfied now," he growled.

"I am." Grimsby smiled as he folded the paper, and put it away carefully in his pocket. "Hope to goodness it won't be long before I present it for payment. Good night. I must be off."

CHAPTER XIII

A TRICKY PASSENGER

THE "Eb and Flo" had come through the falls at high tide, and was lying at one of the wharves above. Eben was in great spirits. He had taken the boat through the falls the day before, discharged the cargo, and had brought her safely back. He had made this call for Gabriel Grimsby, who had arranged with him early that morning to take him up river. As Eben sat upon deck, his hand at times slipped into the right pocket of his trousers and touched the crisp ten dollar bill Grimsby had paid him for his passage. It was more money than he had ever had in his life, so he felt quite rich and important. Just why Grimsby had given him that amount he did not know. Neither did he care. It was good to have so much, and he was happier than he had been for days. He thought of what he would buy with the money, and his mind turned naturally to a new coat, for his best Sunday one was old and worn. He wanted a new pair of boots, nice shiny ones, like city people wore, and not the rough clumsy kind such as his father had always bought. He pictured to himself the look of surprise and admiration upon Jess Randall's face should she see him so well dressed. His Sunday vest, collar and trousers were new, so the coat and boots were all he needed.

Grimsby was late in coming, and when he did at length arrive, it was almost noon. He carried a small grip in his hand, which he placed upon the deck, and

went down into the cabin where Eben was preparing dinner.

"Hello," he accosted. "Thought I was never coming, I s'pose?"

Eben grinned as he turned from the frying-pan where several pieces of bacon were sizzling. He had always liked Grimsby, and the thought of the ten dollars made him more friendly than ever.

"Guess yer in time fer dinner, Gabe," he replied. "Yer always on time fer that, eh?"

"Indeed I am. My! that bacon smells good. And what bread! Did your mother make it?"

"No, Flo cooked that. She certainly does know how to make bread. But, fall to, now, an' help yerself. This bacon's done."

A gentle breeze favoured the "Eb and Flo" as she left her wharf, ran up through the Narrows, and headed out into Grand Bay. It was a perfect summer afternoon, and Grimsby, seated on deck, with his back against the cabin, smoked a cigar to his heart's content. It was a Club Special he was smoking, a rare treat to him. But with so much money in his pocket, he had indulged himself that morning by buying a box of his favourite brand. He felt very prosperous, and contented with himself and the whole world.

"Did ye ever smoke?" he asked Eben, who was standing at the wheel.

"Naw. I tried it once, but it made me sick. Dad licked me fer it, too."

"My, ye miss a lot in life," and Grimsby gave a sigh of satisfaction as he blew a cloud of smoke into the air. "Smoking is a great soother of the nerves, it certainly is."

"Ma doesn't like terbaccer," Eben volunteered. "She says it smells up the house awful. Flo says she'll never marry a man who smokes."

"She won't, eh?" and Grimsby laughed outright. "I s'pose she'll make her husband buy her chocolates instead."

"Most likely. Flo's mighty fond of choc'lates. She'd eat 'em all the time if she could git 'em. She's allus beggin' me to bring her a box every time we come from the city."

"She's just like all girls; they like sweet things. That's the reason, I guess, they like me. I'm always sweet with the girls. It pays. Hand me that grip, will you? I want to show you something I've got for a pretty girl."

Eben reached over, and handed the grip to Grimsby. The latter slowly opened it, and brought forth a box, wrapped up in paper. He untied the string, and held forth a box of chocolates for Eben's inspection.

"Like one, eh?"

"Y' bet. Me mouth's waterin'."

"Then, it'll have to water. These are for a prettier mouth than yours, let me tell you that. My! you should see her, 'specially when she's eating candy."

"Your wife?" Eben asked.

Grimsby shook with laughter, as he carefully placed the paper back upon the box, and returned it to the grip.

"No, no, no, not for my wife this time, Eben. It's for someone else, a special friend of mine. She's up river now, and I'm going to see her. She's in a class all by herself, though just now, poor girl, she's in trouble."

"She is?" Eben was becoming interested.

"Yes, she ran away from home, you see, and her folks don't know where she is. Why, what's wrong, boy? You look scared."

"D'ye mean Miss Randall?" Eben asked. "Are them choc'lates fer her?"

"Ah, you're a good hand at a guess, Eben," and Grimsby smiled. "Yes, I'm taking them to her. She'd never forgive me if I forgot them. Why, I've known Jess Randall ever since she was a baby," he lied. "She calls me 'Uncle Gabe.'"

"She does!" Eben was more impressed than ever with Grimsby.

"Oh, yes, she's a great friend of mine. She must be waiting for me now, so you can pull up and run me ashore when we get there. She phoned to me to come at once, as she wants to see me on special business."

"I'm goin' to stop, anyway," Eben replied. "Dad'll be waitin' fer me. He went ashore with ma."

It was only with difficulty that Grimsby repressed a chuckle of delight. He could hardly believe it possible that Eben had fallen so easily into his snare. But as he glanced at the boy he saw not the slightest sign of suspicion upon his face. Eben's hands were upon the wheel, and his eyes were fixed upon a steamer coming down river. Grimsby was certain now that Miss Randall was at Mrs. Hampton's. So far he had met with remarkable success. He wondered how much further he dare go.

"Guess it'll be some wedding," he ventured. "I'll have to get a brand new suit."

"What weddin'?" Eben asked.

"Why, don't you know? Miss Randall's, of course. She's going to marry Lord Donaster, that swell dude of a chap."

"She's not!" The words snapped from Eben's lips, and his hands gripped hard upon the wheel as he swung the boat somewhat to the left, while the steamer surged by.

"What makes you say that?" Grimsby questioned. This was the first glimpse he had caught of the boy's feeling, and he surmised its meaning.

"D'ye think she'd marry a thing like Donaster?" Eben contemptuously asked. "She's got more sense."

"So you know her, then?" The question caught Eben off guard, and his face suddenly flushed. Grimsby smiled. "She came up with you on your last trip, didn't she?"

"How d'ye know that?" Eben's hands let go of the wheel in his amazement.

"Oh, I know everything. But I guess you're right, Eben. Miss Randall will never marry Donaster. He's after her good and hard, though, so it's up to you and me to help her."

"In what way?"

"She and John Hampton are in love with each other, I understand. Can't we do something to keep Donaster away? He's a deep-dyed villain, that's what he is, and we must not let him bother Miss Randall. He thinks that I'm going to help him out."

"How?" Eben hardly knew that he had asked the question. He was thinking deeply, and wondering why he should help Grimsby. Had not Miss Randall left him for Hampton? The thought rankled in his soul. Why should another have her when she was so much to him? He was aroused by his companion.

"Say, lad, what's the matter with you? I've asked you two questions, and you seem to be stricken dumb. What are you thinking about? Not in love yourself, are you?"

Eben grinned sheepishly, and his face crimsoned a deeper hue than ever.

"What were ye askin' me, Gabe? Guess me mind must have been wanderin'. It goes off sometimes an' fergits to come back. It's bad havin' a mind like that, isn't it?"

It certainly is, and a sure sign that a man's in love, so I've been told. Now, look here, Eben, are you in love

with Miss Randall? There, now, don't get excited. It's only natural. I was young once meself."

"Why d'ye ask me that, Gabe? What makes ye think I'm in love with her?"

"From your actions, boy. And say, if you're in love with Jess Randall, then by the jumping moon, I'm going to help you to get her. I don't care a rap for Donaster or anyone else. I've known you ever since you were a kid, and I've a fancy for you, so there."

Eben made no reply, but stood staring straight before him. During the last few days a notable change had come over this awkward youth. The influence of a deep passion had transformed him from boyhood to manhood, and he was now able to view things in a different light. He did not want Donaster to have Jess Randall, so it was necessary for him to do all in his power to keep her out of his grasp. As for himself he knew there was not the slightest hope that she could ever care for him. And why should she? He had only known her for a brief space of time, and why should such a girl feel any stirring of the heart for such a clown as himself. He knew that he was tall, ungainly, roughly clad, and ignorant. His hands clutched hard upon the wheel as he thought of all this, and an expression of determination overspread his face. A vision of the girl, her beauty, the light in her eyes, and her gentle encouraging voice rose before him. She had been kind to him, and had been interested in his drawings. Between him and her there was a vast gulf, and he knew it. But she had been kind to him. That idea kept repeating itself over and over again in his mind. What could he do to repay her? "Keep Donaster from getting her," came the answer. Yes, but what else? "Help her in her love for Hampton." But in what way? Grimsby broke his reverie.

"Say, Eben, I was almost asleep. I didn't rest well last night."

"What was the trouble, Gabe? Why couldn't ye sleep?"

"Thoughts, boy, thoughts. I was thinking about Donaster."

"H'm, it's no wonder ye couldn't sleep with that skunk in yer mind. Couldn't ye find something better to think about?"

"I suppose so, but I didn't want to. Ye see, he's anxious for me to find Miss Randall for him. Then when she's found, to make a show of kidnapping her, or getting her into a dangerous place, so he can come along and rescue her. See?"

An amused expression shone in Eben's eyes as he turned them upon the face of the reclining man.

"Something like a movin'-picture show, eh?" he queried. "A pretty girl, villains, an' hero all made to order. Ho, ho, that's a good one."

"Seems so. And I guess he wants us to be the villains, Eben. Suppose we try it, boy. It'd be great fun, wouldn't it?"

Eben thought for a few minutes, and then he brought his right hand down upon his thigh with a resounding whack.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed, much excited. "It's jist the thing."

"What is it, lad?"

"An idea, an' we kin work it, too. It'll be great fun."

"Out with it, then."

"S'pose we give Donaster a big scare. I know a dandy place back in the hills where we kin take him. It's an island in a lake, an' there's a cabin there, too. It belongs to the Hamptons. John an' his mother often go out there to look after a coal mine Mr. Hampton found. Ye've heard of it, haven't ye?"

"Sure. I guess everybody knows about it. I understand it's good coal, too."

"Y' bet it, an' Mr. Hampton spent every cent he had in buyin' the land before he let on he had found the coal. John an' his mother hope to make a lot of money out of it. I know the place well."

"But what has this to do with Donaster?" Grimsby asked. "Keep to your story, Eben."

"I'm comin' to that if ye give me time. Now, s'pose we make Donaster think that Miss Randall is hidin' out there on that island with the Hamptons. Let's send fer him, take him there, give him the slip, an' do a few other things to scare him. I'd like to hear him yell fer a while. He can't git off the island till we go fer him. Oh, it'd be great fun."

"It certainly would," Grimsby replied. "But you'll have to do it, Eben. When could you go?"

"To-morrow, I guess. I'm goin' to stay home this trip, an' let dad take the boat to the quarry. You git Donaster, an' I'll take him out. But you'll have to come along, too, Gabe. I won't go without you. I might want help."

After some hesitation, Grimsby decided to go. He did not fancy the jaunt, but he favoured the idea, and if Eben would not go without him, there was nothing else for him to do but to go along. He could phone for Donaster in the morning, and he knew that the fellow would come at once.

This was what Grimsby told Eben, and he smiled to himself as he glanced at the unsuspecting lad at the wheel. He was playing into his hands, and he felt perfectly sure of him now. His next move was with Miss Randall and John Hampton. He was silent a long time as the boat glided on her way. Eben thought he was half asleep, but in reality he was very much awake, revolving in his mind a scheme which had been suggested by the mention of the coal mine near Island Lake. The more he thought it over, the more pleased he became, and by

the time they came in sight of his house, he had the plan pretty well worked out.

"Guess you'd better let me off at my own shore," he remarked.

"Why, I thought ye was goin' home with me," Eben replied.

"I did intend to. But I'd like to visit my own family first. I haven't seen them for several days. I'll be on hand with Donaster to-morrow, so you be all ready."

In less than a half hour Eben rounded up the "Eb and Flo" near the shore in front of the Grimsby house, which was a poor, ramshackle affair. The water here was deep, so he was able to run close to the bank. A long-haired, ragged, dirty boy pushed off for his father in a leaky boat, and took him ashore. In a few minutes more the "Eb and Flo" was again under way, clipping along under the light breeze, bound for Beech Cove several miles beyond.

CHAPTER XIV

ANOTHER VICTIM

THE garden in front of the Hampton cottage was at its best on a bright summer afternoon. As Mrs. Hampton stood in the midst of the flowers, her eyes shone with pride. She was very much at home here, and loved each flower, from the delicate, fragrant mignonette to the gaily-coloured, boisterous tiger-lily. The fence surrounding the garden was lost in a wealth of vines, chief among which was the morning-glory, whose vase-shaped blossoms were drooping sleepily beneath the sun's hot glare.

Close to the garden ran the main highway, and at times Mrs. Hampton lifted her head and looked longingly down the road as if expecting someone. She was a woman of generous mould, and graceful bearing, scarcely past the meridian of life. It was not age which had whitened her hair, and years of toil had not stamped the furrows upon her brow, nor fixed the sad expression in her clear blue eyes. Something more subtle than the silent alchemy of time had wrought the change, and of this Mrs. Hampton was thinking now.

The click of the garden gate startled her, and turning quickly she saw Gabriel Grimsby, hot and dust-laden coming toward her. His face was beaming as usual, but more sunburnt, and he was mopping his forehead with a big red handkerchief. Mrs. Hampton smiled as she held out a hand of welcome.

"I am glad to see you, Gabriel," she accosted. "It

has been a long time since you were here. Busy, I suppose?"

"Very. My, it's hot!" he panted, as he again wiped his brow. "I never felt the heat so much before. It must be ninety in the shade."

"Hardly that," and Mrs. Hampton smiled. "Come up on the verandah, Gabriel. I think you will find it nice and cool there."

Grimsby at once followed Mrs. Hampton out of the garden, and up the steps to the spacious verandah, where he sank at once into a comfortable chair.

"This is great!" he exclaimed. "You are fortunate in having such a beautiful spot."

"You are tired, Gabriel. Just rest yourself. I shall be back shortly."

Grimsby smiled contentedly when Mrs. Hampton had gone, and looked curiously around.

"The Hamptons must be doing well," he mused. "House newly painted, farm in good condition, and garden the finest I have seen. They must have a snug bank-account from all appearance. And why shouldn't they? If there was a brood of kids to feed, such as I have, it would make a great difference. Maybe they've made good with that coal mine. Anyway, I guess I've struck this place about the right time. People who have plenty should help them who haven't much. This is certainly restful after that long walk. I wonder where John is."

His meditation was interrupted by Mrs. Hampton's return. She carried a tray containing a glass of home-made wine, and a plate of frosted doughnuts. Grimsby was all alert now, and smiling blandly.

"This is certainly good of you, madame," he remarked as he took the glass, and one of the doughnuts. "It's not often I get treated this way, especially when I call on business."

"What are you doing these days, Gabriel?" Mrs. Hampton asked as she placed the plate of doughnuts upon a flower-shelf near at hand, and seated herself upon the verandah steps.

Grimsby sipped the wine, and bit off a piece of his doughnut before replying. Then he looked at his hostess in a quizzical manner.

"Don't you know my business, madame?"

"I am afraid not, Gabriel, as you have been at so many different things during the last few years. I hope you have settled down to something steady for the sake of your family, at least."

"You need not worry at all about me now," and Grimsby's eyes twinkled. He was thinking of the surprise he had in store for this woman, so he could take her words with good grace. "But money isn't everything, madame. Just think of that poor girl who drowned herself last night at Benton's wharf. She had all the good things of life, and yet she was not happy."

"What girl?" Mrs. Hampton asked. "I haven't heard about her."

"No, I suppose not. I only learned the news this morning. Men are now dragging the river for her body."

"It is certainly sad. Who is she? and why did she drown herself?"

"She is the only daughter of Randall, the big lumber merchant. Her father and mother wanted her to marry some young Lord, Donaster I think is his name. But she objected, so when they insisted, she took the matter into her own hands and made an end to her young life. So you see, madame, money isn't everything, is it?"

"Was she quite young?" Mrs. Hampton asked, unheeding Grimsby's question.

"About twenty, so I understand. And very pretty, too. I have seen her two or three times. She was very

much sought after by young men, and a great favourite in society, so I have been told."

"How did she drown herself?"

"Went out in a boat, so I believe, and jumped overboard. They found the boat adrift down river this morning, and her hat was picked up along the shore. That's about all I know."

"Dear me, this is very sad," and Mrs. Hampton sighed. "I suppose John will know more about the affair when he comes home. Help yourself to the doughnuts, Gabriel."

"Thanks, madame. They are delicious. Your son is not at home, then?"

"No. He went to the city yesterday, and I am expecting him at any minute."

"What a big, fine-looking fellow he is getting to be, madame. I saw him the other day, and was surprised at the way he has grown. He's a great worker, too, so I hear."

"Yes, John is a good boy, Gabriel. He is a great comfort to me."

"Better than a daughter, eh?" As Grimsby asked the question he noted that Mrs. Hampton gave a slight start, and it pleased him. "A girl wouldn't be much use on a farm such as this," he continued. "I suppose he's doing something with that coal mine, too."

"It's the mine that took him to the city. The prospects are very encouraging, so I am anxious to hear how he has made out."

"A daughter, then, wouldn't be able to carry on such work, would she, madame?"

"I suppose not," was the somewhat slow reply. "But why do you ask? Why do you mention a daughter to me?"

"Why shouldn't I? You have a daughter, haven't you?"

At these words Mrs. Hampton's face turned white. She rose to her feet, her whole body trembling, and confronted Grimsby.

"What do you mean?" she gasped. "Why do you ask whether I have a daughter?"

"It's true, though, isn't it? There, now, don't get so worked up. You seem to take my simple question very much to heart."

With her hand pressing her side, Mrs. Hampton stood staring upon the placid man before her. What does he know? she asked herself. Why did he mention a daughter to me?

"I see I am not far astray, madame. You have a daughter, and it is concerning her that I am here."

"Oh!" It was all that the woman could say, but the tone in which it was uttered clearly expressed the agony of her soul.

"Yes, madame, you understand now my business. For some time I tried to enlighten people's minds by supplying them with good literature. But business is dull these days, so I have been forced to turn to something else for a living for me and mine. And I must say that this new business pays much better. I am a stand-between, and in that capacity I am here to-day."

"A stand-between! I do not know what you mean."

"Quite true, madame. It is hard for you, living so comfortably, to understand how difficult it is for some people to stand between those they love and poverty. I fear I have not done very well along that line in the past, though I am improving now."

"But what has all this to do with my daughter, of whom you speak?" Mrs. Hampton somewhat impatiently asked. "What right have you even to suggest that I have a daughter."

"Can you deny it?"

"Yes, I do."

"Madame! I am surprised at you."

"You need not be at all surprised, sir. I had a daughter once, but she has been dead for many years."

"Ah, madame, dead to you, perhaps, but not to others. Have you forgotten that?"

For a few seconds Mrs. Hampton tried to maintain her composure. But the strain was too much upon her, so sinking down upon the steps, she buried her face in her hands. Grimsby was by no means affected by the woman's distress. He rather enjoyed it. He knew now that she was in his power. Drawing forth a package of cigarettes, he selected one, lighted it, and smoked in silent contentment. He had often seen his wife in just such a situation, so it was nothing new to him.

At length Mrs. Hampton lifted her head and looked at Grimsby. There were tears in her eyes, and her face was drawn and white. The comfortable, self-satisfied man annoyed her, and a wave of indignation swept upon her.

"Why have you come here to-day to torment me?" she asked.

"Torment you! In what way?"

"By your words of insinuation."

"Are they not true?"

"Suppose I deny them?"

"It would be no use, madame. I have all the necessary proof."

"Of what?"

"Don't you know? Do you wish me to tell what happened in a private hospital, twenty years ago, and how you exchanged——"

"Stop, stop! For God's sake, don't say any more!"

"You acknowledge it all, then?"

"How can I deny it? But who told you?"

"Madame," and Grimsby flicked the ashes from his cigarette as he spoke, "when a man has a wife such as

mine, sooner or later he learns many interesting things."

"Your wife! What does she know?"

"Evidently too much for your peace of mind."

"But how does she know?"

"Simply because she happened to be Hettie Rawlins before she became Mrs. Grimsby."

"Hettie Rawlins," Mrs. Hampton repeated. "That name sounds familiar. Where have I heard it before?"

"In that private hospital, madame. She was the girl who exchanged the babies. Surely you have not forgotten her."

"Oh, now I do remember. And she is your wife?"

"She is, unfortunate for her."

"This is all new to me."

"Strange that you should forget her, isn't it?"

"Not at all. I knew her only slightly at the hospital, as she was seldom in my room."

"But long enough to transact a very important business matter, eh?"

"Yes, yes, too long! May God have mercy upon me for my sin! It is almost more than I can stand."

"But you have stood it well all these years, madame."

"You think so, do you? But you little know what agony of soul I have endured. Oh, it has been terrible!"

"H'm," Grimsby grunted, "it seems to me you have had many compensations, such as the money you received, a fine place like this, a good son, you call your own, and the prospect of making considerable out of your coal mine. Surely they have been a balm to your heart and mind. They would be to mine, anyway."

"No, no no!" the woman declared. "Nothing can ever take the place of my own sweet baby I so rashly bartered away. I thought so once, fool that I was, but I know better now. No matter how dear another child may become, and John means much to me, it is not one's own flesh and blood. No one but a mother who has suffered

can fully understand this. During the twenty years that have passed since my fatal mistake, my baby girl has been ever with me. If alive, she is a young woman now. She goes by some other name, and calls another woman 'mother.' She does not know of my existence, and even if she heard my name or met me face to face, I would mean nothing to her."

Mrs. Hampton ceased, and looked out over the rippling surface of the noble St. John. Far down the river her eyes caught the gleam of a white sail, bending to the gentle breeze. She knew that the boat must be the "Eb and Flo," for Mrs. Tobin had called that morning and told her that she was expecting her son and husband home. But it meant nothing to her, neither was she aware of a slight graceful girl standing by the captain's side, asking questions about the various places along the river. Had she but known, how soon her look of indifference would have vanished.

"So you have no knowledge, then, as to your—your daughter's whereabouts?" It was Grimsby speaking, and it aroused her from her reverie.

"None at all. I do not even know the name of the woman who got my baby."

"She was very wealthy, I suppose?"

"I believe so, but——" She suddenly stopped, and an expression of hope leaped into her eyes. "Tell me, do you know where she is? Your wife must know, anyway."

She waited almost breathlessly for a reply, but when Grimsby smiled and shook his head, the light of hope faded from her eyes.

"You don't know?" she asked in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

"I didn't say that, madame. Maybe I know and maybe I don't. But what good would it do if I should tell where she is? You could not get her back again,

no matter how hard you might try. And, besides, she wouldn't want to come. She has been brought up to a life of luxury of which you know nothing. She moves in high social circles, and would be ashamed of you. Suppose she should find out that you are her mother, what would she think if she learned how you sold her for money when she was a helpless baby? Have you thought of that?"

"Stop, stop! For God's sake don't say any more!" the unhappy woman pleaded. "It is all too true, but I can hardly bear it. I know she would scorn me for what I did. But it would be a comfort if I could look upon her, see her face, and know that she is my child. If I could but feast my eyes upon her even for a few minutes, it would mean everything to me."

"No, madame, you are mistaken. If you saw her once it would make you more dissatisfied than ever. It would only add to your agony of soul, of which you speak."

"So you won't tell me, Gabriel?"

"No, I must not."

"Then why have you come here to-day to torment me? Why have you mentioned my child to me? I believe you know where she is, and yet you will not tell me. What is the meaning of all this?"

"Ah, now you are coming to the point," and Grimsby smilingly rubbed his hands together in satisfaction. "I have a definite purpose in coming to see you to-day. I felt that I could not delay any longer. It is a mere matter of business, nothing more."

"Has it anything to do with the mine, Gabriel?"

"Oh, not at all. It is far more important to you than that. It has to do with something that happened twenty years ago. There, now, madame, keep calm. Don't get excited. I see you understand to what I refer, and that is good. Now, how would you like for that to be known?"

"Heavens, man! Are you in earnest? Surely you must be joking."

"Not at all. I was never more in earnest in my life. I merely asked if you would like the above-mentioned transaction made public. That is all I wish to know."

"No, no; it must not be mentioned. For almost twenty years it has been kept a secret, and why should the public know of it now? It would break my heart. I could never face anyone again. And John, who is so dear to me, what would he think? How could I explain? It must not be! You will not tell, will you?"

Grimsby lighted another cigarette, crossed his legs, and smoked contentedly. He was quite satisfied, so could afford to take his time. This woman's trouble was nothing to him, and no accusing conscience worried him in the least degree. He was past all that.

"I shall not tell, madame," he at length replied, "that is, providing you make it worth while."

"In what way, Gabriel? What can I do to obtain your silence?"

"There is only one thing that will perform the charm. It has seldom failed. I believe it is still powerful to silence tongues. It will keep mine still, at any rate. Is it hard to guess what that is? You should know of all women, for it proved effective twenty years ago."

Mrs. Hampton started, and looked keenly into the face of the man before her.

"Do you mean money?" she asked. "Is that what will silence your tongue?"

"Ah, I am glad that you have guessed it, madame. It will save unnecessary talk. Yes, it is money, for it is money I need more than anything else."

"Gabriel Grimsby! I cannot believe this of you. I always considered you a man above such things. Are you willing to take money for keeping silent? Would you not be afraid to use it?"

"Afraid! Of what, pray?"

"Of what might happen. Money obtained in such a way never does any good."

"Are you speaking from experience, madame? It was not so in your case, I believe."

Mrs. Hampton made no reply. Her eyes dropped, and her face flushed. Grimsby knew that the thrust had gone home, and he again smiled.

"You understand, I see," he continued. "That is the only thing, madame, which will cause me to keep your secret."

"And if I don't give you anything?"

"You will have to take the consequences. Are you willing to do that?"

"No, no! This must never be known. How much do you want? Tell me quick, and let us get through with this terrible business."

"I am quite as anxious as you are, madame. The amount depends upon how much you are prepared to give."

"You want me to mortgage this place, I suppose. You will not be satisfied with a small amount."

"Indeed I shall. Surely you must have some money on hand now. That will be sufficient for the present. Then, when you sell your mine, you might remember your benefactor."

"Benefactor! Robber you should say," Mrs. Hampton indignantly retorted. "To think that I should be held up by such a person as you. But it cannot be helped, I suppose. Will one hundred dollars satisfy you? It is all I have."

Grimsby bowed, and waved his hand in an eloquent manner.

"It will be very acceptable to me just now. One hundred dollars! It seems like a fortune to me. It will do nicely."

Mrs. Hampton rose to her feet, and remained for a few seconds thoughtfully silent. Then she turned toward Grimsby.

"If I give you this money, Gabriel, how can I trust you to keep this secret?"

"I give you my word of honour, madame. Bring the Bible, and I shall swear by it."

Mrs. Hampton gave a deep sigh as she turned toward the door of the house. "I am afraid, Gabriel, that your word of honour isn't worth much, and that the Bible wouldn't make any difference. However, I suppose I shall have to trust you. Just wait a minute."

Grimsby was greatly pleased with himself now. His eyes were turned toward the river, fixed upon the white sail which was much nearer. He had accomplished his object easier than he had expected. In a short time Mrs. Hampton returned, and handed him a roll of bills.

"There, you will find the full amount," she quietly told him. "It is all I have in the house. I hope you are satisfied."

Grimsby was about to speak, when a raucous toot of an auto down the road caused Mrs. Hampton to turn suddenly. At once her face went very white, and she laid her hand heavily upon the man's arm.

"It's John!" she gasped. "Leave at once!"

In an instant Grimsby was on his feet. He seized his hat, leaped down the steps, rushed toward the gate, and was walking rapidly down the road as the car sped up. The driver hailed him in passing. He waved in reply, and then hurried on his way. Grimsby was not anxious to meet John Hampton just then.

CHAPTER XV

TWO WOMEN'S TROUBLES

AFTER stopping his car before the cottage, John Hampton alighted and gave a quick glance toward the "Eb and Flo," now abreast of Beech Cove. He then turned, opened the gate, and hurried up the path to the house. His every movement was expressive of abounding health and buoyant vitality. As Mrs. Hampton met him on the verandah, her eyes kindled with pride. He was so big and manly, and his bronzed, clean-shaven face glowed with animation. He stooped to kiss her, and then holding her at arm's length looked anxiously into her eyes.

"Mother dear, what is the matter?" he asked. "You are so pale."

"I have been worrying about you, John," Mrs. Hampton evaded, while a wan smile flickered about the corners of her mouth. "I was afraid something had happened to you."

"I was unavoidably delayed, mother. I hoped to get home last night, but it was late before I saw Mr. Perkins. He kept me waiting a long time."

"Will he buy the mine?" Mrs. Hampton was eagerly alert now, and some of the colour had returned to her cheeks.

"He would give me no definite answer, mother. He put me off as usual."

"But he knows the value of the mine, does he not?"

"Oh, yes. He had an expert make a report, which is

very favourable, so I understand. The seam is a long one, but it only comes to the surface on our place, which will make the mining very easy. Deep shafts would have to be sunk elsewhere, which would make the work most expensive. I wish to goodness we could mine it ourselves."

"That is out of the question, John," and Mrs. Hampton sighed. "Your—your father often talked to me about it, and I remember how he planned to form a company, which would build a small railway line into the mine. But his sudden death upset everything. I have been trying for years to interest men of money, but so far without any success. Now, however, with coal at such a price and hard to obtain, I have been hoping that we might succeed."

"Mr. Perkins wants it for almost nothing, mother; that is the trouble. The mine is so far back, he said, that it would cost almost more than it is worth to bring it to the river. I know that is all nonsense, and told him so."

"Isn't there someone else, John?"

"Only one I know of, and that is Mr. Randall, the lumber merchant. But he refused point blank to have anything to do with it. He was very nasty and said his business was lumbering and not mining. I thought he would kick me out of his office, he was so ugly."

"That was last night, you say?"

"Yes, just before six o'clock."

"He had not heard, then, of his daughter's terrible deed."

John started, and looked keenly into Mrs. Hampton's face.

"Why, what have you heard about his daughter, mother?" He tried to be calm, but his heart was beating rapidly.

"I heard that she drowned herself last night."

"Who told you that?"

"Gabriel Grimsby. He called in to rest for a while this afternoon. You met him, did you not?"

"Indeed I did, the rascal. But he is not anxious to meet me. I let him have ten dollars some time ago, and he has given me a wide berth ever since. What did Gabe tell you about Miss Randall?"

"Not very much. He merely said that she was a beautiful girl, much sought after, and moved a great deal in society. It seems that her parents wanted to force her to marry a man for whom she did not care, a Lord Somebody or other, and in despair she took her own life. Poor girl! it is very sad. You must have heard of it, John, and whether they have found her body."

John was listening intently to every word, at the same time watching the "Eb and Flo" bearing steadily up river.

"They have not found her body," he absently replied. "There is great excitement at Benton's wharf, and the river is now being dragged for her body."

"Dear me!" Mrs. Hampton sighed. "Her parents must be heart-broken."

"Heart-broken! H'm, they haven't any hearts to break. If they had, they wouldn't try to force their only daughter to marry a thing like Donaster."

"It is often done, though, John."

"I know it is. Some parents seem to think nothing of selling their daughters to the highest bidders. Imagine you, mother, doing such a thing if you had a daughter."

Mrs. Hampton turned her face toward the door lest John should detect the colour mounting her temples. But the young man noticed nothing out of the ordinary. He was looking out upon the river, watching the "Eb and Flo," now not far away. Presently he turned, and pulled out his watch.

"Why, it's five o'clock!" he exclaimed. "I had no idea it was so late. I have to go to the quarry, mother, on—on business. I want to see someone there."

"To-night?" Mrs. Hampton asked somewhat surprised, for John seldom went to the quarry, and she could not imagine what business could take him there now.

"Yes, I must go at once. I shall tell you all about it later."

"But you must have some supper first, dear. Just wait, it will not take me long."

"Very well, then, mother. While you're getting it ready I will look after the car. And, say, could you let me have some money to-morrow? I had only a little with me in the city, and besides having the car fixed, I had to get a new tire. I got it charged, promising to send the money as soon as I got home. I guess to-morrow will do, as I have not time to-night."

What Mrs. Hampton said in reply she did not know. Her brain was in a tumult as she made her way into the kitchen. How could she explain? What should she say? John knew about the one hundred dollars they had in the house, and what reason could she give for spending it? And he wanted it the next day!

When supper was ready she called John and tried to be as bright and cheerful as possible as they both sat down to the table. It was a cosy dining-room, and through the open window drifted the delicate fragrance of field and garden. But Mrs. Hampton was oblivious to this now. Amidst scenes of peace and beauty she was living in a world of misery, for a heavy heart makes the most beautiful surroundings a wretched mockery.

John was in excellent spirits and ate heartily. So intent was he upon his own affairs that he did not notice Mrs. Hampton's absent-mindedness.

"I may be away all night, mother," he told her, "so

do not be uneasy. In fact, I might not be home until to-morrow night. You can get along, can you not? I know it isn't fair to leave you all the work to do, but I shall make up for it when I come back."

"It must be very important business, John, that will keep you at the quarry so long. Is it a secret?"

"It is for the present. There is a surprise in store for you." The young man's face coloured as he spoke, and this the woman silently noted.

"Agreeable?" she asked.

"I hope so. Just you wait." His boyish laugh rang out as he rose from the table. He suddenly ceased, however, and turned to his mother.

"Oh, about that money order! It must go to-morrow. If I should not be back in time, would you mind sending it? But, no, perhaps I had better take the money with me now, and get it at the store on my way to the quarry. There will be time, and I don't want to give you all the trouble. You will have enough to do without anything extra."

"No, no, John, it won't trouble me one bit," Mrs. Hampton hastened to assure him. "I have to go to the store in the morning, and can get the money order as well as not. Leave it to me. It's the Empire Garage, I think you said, where it is to be sent."

"Yes, that's the place. And thank you very much, mother. There's the bill. It's quite large, I know, but it's the first I've had to pay for some time."

He laid the paper upon the table, and was about to leave the room, when a heavy step was heard upon the verandah. In another minute an excited woman stood before them. She was panting heavily, and her hair was in much disorder.

"Why, Mrs. Tobin, what's the matter?" Mrs. Hampton asked, alarmed at her visitor's agitation.

"They've left me! They've left me!" she wailed,

sinking down exhausted in the nearest chair. "Oh, to think that I have come to this!"

"Who have left you, Mrs. Tobin?" John asked. "What do you mean?"

"Sam'l an' Eben, of course. They sailed right by, and never stopped. What do you think of that?"

"That's nothing to worry about, Mrs. Tobin. They must have some good reason which they will no doubt explain later."

"You think so, do you?" the visitor demanded. "What makes you think there is a reason why they should go by without stopping?"

"I have no idea at all," the young man replied. "I only said that perhaps they had a reason."

"H'm, is that all you know about it? But I tell you there *is* a reason, and I'm going to find out. If it wasn't for leaving Flo alone I'd foot it every step of the way to the quarry this blessed night; that's what I'd do."

"Come, come, Mrs. Tobin, there is nothing to worry about," Mrs. Hampton comforted. "Surely you can trust your husband. Don't get so excited. Think of those poor people who lost their only daughter last night; drowned herself at Benton's wharf. What is your trouble compared to theirs?"

"Drowned herself, did you say?" and Mrs. Tobin held up her hands in horror. "Who was she? and why did she drown herself?"

"She was Mr. Henry Randall's daughter, who was greatly worried over some love affair, so I understand."

"Is that so? My lands! What's going to happen next? A girl drowned, and my husband and only son running away from me. It is terrible!"

With considerable effort John kept from smiling as he listened to Mrs. Tobin. What to her was a very serious matter, was to him cause for amusement. He was quite sure why the captain had sailed by Beech Cove

without stopping as was his custom. Neither could he blame him. Any man would do the same who might have the misfortune to be united to such a woman as Mrs. Tobin. The captain was only acting in self-defence in his dash by his home and the wife he had chosen. John pictured to himself the state of affairs on the "Eb and Flo" had Mrs. Tobin gone aboard and there found the runaway girl. Explanation, he knew, would be useless, and it would be a very serious matter for the captain and his fair passenger. In fact, he felt quite proud of the captain's action, and considered him in the light of a hero. He pitied him as well, for he knew that he would have to face his wife's sharp tongue and searching questions upon his next visit home.

While the young man was thinking of these things, Mrs. Hampton was talking with her visitor. The latter was sipping a cup of tea, and nibbling at a piece of cake. She was becoming calmer under Mrs. Hampton's soothing influence, and inclined to take a brighter view of the situation.

"Keep up courage, Mrs. Tobin," John told her as he turned to leave the room. "I must hurry away now. If I happen to see the captain I shall tell him of your anxiety. You might, indeed, worry if your husband had the habit of running off with some other woman. But he is too old and steady for such nonsense." John knew how this would arouse the woman, for jealousy was one of her chief characteristics.

"That is just what I do fear," Mrs. Tobin replied. "Sam'l was always a little soft about women, and there are too many bad hussies in the city. When a man is away from home as much as he is, you can never be sure what he's up to. Why, even now he might have one of them brazen creatures on board. No, there's no fool like an old fool when it comes to women."

"But Eben's with him, isn't he? The captain wouldn't surely cut up any capers with his son on board."

"Eben! H'm! Little good would he be. He lives in the clouds when he isn't eating and sleeping. He wouldn't notice anything wrong with a dozen hussies on board. I don't know what I'm going to do with that boy."

"You are certainly worried about your family, Mrs. Tobin."

"Indeed I am, and no one knows it as well as I do. I'm not even certain of Flo. She has notions of her own which don't at all agree with my way of thinking."

John smiled broadly as he bade the woman good-bye, and left the house. Mrs. Tobin amused him greatly, and he was thinking of the lively scene that would take place when the captain came home.

CHAPTER XVI

MORE THAN A DREAM

VERY little sleep came to Mrs. Hampton that night. The disturbing events of the day still agitated her mind, giving her much anxiety. Grimsby's visit was the principal cause, for she felt that she could not trust the man, notwithstanding the money he had received and his promise of secrecy. Was her child alive? she asked herself over and over again. Her heart called out for even the slightest knowledge of the one she had bartered for money. Money! The thought stung and almost maddened her. She had given her own flesh and blood for money, and her punishment was rapidly increasing upon her. Her sin had followed her through the years, and had now suddenly enmeshed her. The steady tick of the clock seemed like an accusing voice to her hot brain, and the gentle motion of the blind at the open window annoyed her. She fancied it knew of her guilt and was mocking her. She was learning, as others have learned, that to the conscience-stricken heart and mind all things, even the inanimate, are banded together in a conspiracy of mockery and revenge.

She wondered, too, about John's strange behaviour. What was his special call to the quarry, and what was the secret he was keeping from her? He had never acted in such a manner before, and he only stayed from home at night on an occasional visit to the city. Had he fallen in with evil companions? She banished this idea, however, when she recalled how he had told her that he had

a surprise in store for her, and that it was a pleasant one. Try as she might, she could not imagine what that might be, for the thought of a woman never once entered her mind. Not for an instant could she imagine John being in love, so engrossed was he with the affairs of the farm and the mine.

Although the night was long, she dreaded the coming of a new day. In some way she had to get the money to pay that bill, and where was it to come from? All the money, except a few dollars in the bank, had been withdrawn to pay for the car. It had been an expensive luxury, she was well aware, but John had set his mind upon it, and she had not the heart to oppose his wish. Hitherto the car had cost but little apart from the running expenses. In case anything did happen they had the one hundred dollars for immediate use. Now that was gone, and Mrs. Hampton had no idea how it was to be replaced. She must raise the amount some way, or else invent some plausible excuse as to what she had done with it. And the sum of sixty dollars was needed the next day, in the morning, too, so it could go to the city by the afternoon mail. After she had racked her brain in vain for some method of raising the money, she made up her mind that she must borrow it. The storekeeper would let her have it, she was certain. But how could she pay it back?

She thought of all these things as the night dragged by. Her wide sleepless eyes were still staring into space as the faint dawn of a new day came stealing gently into the room, and the birds outside the window began their early morning chorus. She arose, dressed herself, and attended to her household duties. There was also the work at the barn to be done, the cows to be milked, turned out to pasture, and the horses to be fed. Very rarely was she called upon to do such work, as John had always attended to this himself, and she wondered why he had

not mentioned it that afternoon. He seemed to have forgotten all about it. The business which took him to the quarry must be of special importance, she mused. If it was anyone else than John she would feel sure that he was in love.

About the middle of the forenoon she went to the store, and surprised the storekeeper by asking him to lend her sixty-five dollars for one month. He was quite willing to accede to her request, for she was a good customer, and always paid cash for whatever she bought. He looked at her curiously, nevertheless, after he had counted out the bills, and then made out a money order payable at St. John. He had known Mrs. Hampton for many years, and had never known her to borrow money before. Everyone supposed that she had a large bank account.

"You must have some security for this," she told him. "I shall give you a note."

"Not at all, Mrs. Hampton," the storekeeper protested. "Your word is all the note I need. I wish the same could be said of others. By the way, John seems very busy these days. He went by here like a whirlwind last night. Nothing wrong, I hope."

"No, nothing so far as I know. John is a fast driver, anyway."

Mrs. Hampton waited until the mail arrived, and when she had received her daily paper she walked slowly down the road. It was a beautiful day, though rather hot, so after she had gone some distance, she was glad to sit down to rest under the shade of a big maple tree. Hardly a ripple ruffled the surface of the river which stretched out before her. Its calmness appealed to her. Then she suddenly remembered the tragedy which had taken place at Benton's wharf. Somewhere, perhaps, in its quiet depths a girl was lying, who, but a few days before was full of abounding health and strength. The

river, however, gave no sign of its secret, but smiled beneath the morning sun. "How like many a life that river is," she thought. "Outwardly everything seems full of peace and happiness, while all the time tragedy lurks beneath. That is the way with mine, at any rate. My friends, neighbours, and even John are unaware of the sin hidden within my soul. They imagine that my life is one of contentment, little realising how miserable I really am."

Unfolding the newspaper, she cast her eyes at the various headlines until they rested upon one which arrested her attention. It was set forth in large type, and described in vivid language the supposed drowning of Henry Randall's only daughter the night before. The article was well written, and told about Miss Randall's beauty, charm of manner, and her many friends, who were greatly shocked over the tragedy. Her parents were grief-stricken, and Mrs. Randall was inconsolable. There was no doubt at all but that the girl had committed suicide, distracted over a love affair. The river had been thoroughly searched, but so far the body of the missing girl had not been found.

Mrs. Hampton could not get this story out of her mind, and she thought much about it as she walked home. As she went about her work that afternoon the girl was ever before her. Though she had never seen her, yet she pictured her with white face, and eyes filled with despair, rowing out from the wharf, and ending her young life. So she, too, had her troubles, poor girl!

As the afternoon was drawing to a close, and Mrs. Hampton was resting for a few minutes on the verandah, Flo Tobin came and sat down by her side. She was a frequent visitor, and Mrs. Hampton was always glad to see her. She was of a bright, sunny disposition, altogether different from her mother, and with none of Eben's peculiarities.

"Wasn't it terrible about that girl drowning herself last night?" she at once began. "I can't get her out of my mind."

"It is very sad," Mrs. Hampton replied. "She had everything that money can buy, and yet she was not happy."

"Money isn't everything," and Flo looked thoughtfully out upon the river as she spoke. "Now, look at me. I have a home, food, clothes, and such things, but they don't always make a girl happy. She needs to be understood, and that's where parents so often fail. I don't blame that girl for doing what she did. I have often felt like doing the same thing myself."

"Flo! I am astonished to hear you say such a thing."

"I know you are, but it is true, for all that. What have I to live for, anyway? Mother keeps me tied to the house most of the time, and doesn't want me to associate with other girls, or go to parties for fear I might go astray. She says that home is the place for girls."

"Your mother means well, dear. She is a good woman, and believes she is doing the best she can for you."

"I suppose she does," and the girl sighed. "But sometimes she makes me hate goodness and all good people, so I feel like being bad just for a change. Mother's method of goodness rubs me the wrong way. I am afraid you wouldn't call her very good if you knew how mad she is to-day about daddy and Eben sailing by without stopping. I pity them, for they will have a hard time when they come home. But there's mother calling me now. She can't bear to have me out of her sight even for a few minutes."

As Mrs. Hampton watched the girl as she hurried down to the road, she thought how nice it would be to have such a daughter as Flo. What a companion she would be, and how proud she would be of her. And she might

have had one, more beautiful, perhaps, than Flo but for her own mad deed years ago. Yet her daughter was somewhere in the world, unknown to her even by name. The only recollection she had of her was when the nurse had brought her to the bedside in the hospital for her to see. But she was so weak and tired then, that she had merely glanced at the little one. Her husband's critical financial affairs were a great worry to her at that time, so the thought of paying the doctor, the hospital bill, and providing for the child was most distressing. The simple matter of exchanging the babies had been done so quietly that she hardly realised that it had taken place. Babies, after all, were very much alike, and when next time the nurse brought a little bundled form to her side she could not tell it from her own. It was only afterwards, when her strength returned, that her heart cried out for her own flesh and blood, the one for whom she had suffered so much. Even her husband never knew what she endured. The money had meant a great deal to him, and he was pleased to know that the baby was a boy who would grow up as his own son.

It was late that night when Mrs. Hampton went to bed. She had stayed up longer than usual, waiting for John. But when the clock struck eleven and he had not arrived, she wearily made her way upstairs to her room. She left the front door unlocked, and a lunch on the dining-room table, for John always liked something to eat before retiring.

Mrs. Hampton found it hard to get to sleep, and she lay awake for some time. When slumber did at last seal her eyes she was beset by a fantastic dream. She was surrounded by all kinds of people, greatly excited. They were constantly moving, some coming and others going. Faces and forms appeared and vanished in a bewildering manner. At last one stood out clear from all the rest. It was the face of a beautiful girl, who looked upon her

with longing eyes and called her "mother." With a cry, Mrs. Hampton reached out her arms to enfold her, but the girl disappeared, and in her stead stood John, with a smile upon his face.

"Been having a dream, mother?" he asked. "It must have been an exciting one."

Somewhat dazed, Mrs. Hampton looked at the young man before her, and her senses returned. She smiled faintly, and asked him the time.

"It is past midnight," was the reply. "I am sorry to disturb you, but you are needed downstairs. I have someone with me who has met with a slight accident."

"A man or a woman?"

"A woman. Just slip on your dressing-gown."

"All right, John, I shall be down in a few minutes." Mrs. Hampton was sitting up in bed now, fully awake. Someone needed her, so she must not delay.

It did not take her long to dress, and as she left her room and descended the stairs, she noticed a light shining from the parlour. She thought it strange that John should take the woman in there. Stepping softly, she reached the door, and was about to enter, when she suddenly stopped, and stared with amazement upon the scene which met her eyes. Lying upon the sofa was a young woman, a mere girl so she seemed, with a white bandage bound about her forehead. John was kneeling by her side, with his right hand in hers, and his eyes fixed lovingly upon her face. All this Mrs. Hampton noted at the first glance, and the reason for John's visit to the quarry was at once apparent.

And as she looked the girl slightly turned her head, and as Mrs. Hampton's eyes rested upon her face, she gave a great start and clutched at the side of the door for support. It was the face of the girl she had seen in her dream! It was her own daughter who had appeared to her for one fleeting instant. Mrs. Hampton trembled

violently as she stood there. Was she still asleep? she wondered, and would she awake to find it all a dream? But when she saw the look of love in the girl's eyes, and the smile which illumined her face, she knew that it was no fading dream. And just then John saw her.

"Mother!" he cried, leaping to his feet. "I am glad you have come. Here she is, and she wants to meet you."

He had now taken Mrs. Hampton by the arm, and was leading her across the room to where the girl was lying.

"Mother, this is Jess—Jess Randall, and she has met with an accident. I have brought her here for you to nurse."

"Jess Randall!" Mrs. Hampton repeated, as she took the girl's hand in hers. It was the name of the girl who had been drowned at Benton's wharf. Could it be possible that she was the same! And was this stranger her own daughter?

John noted her bewildered look, and laughed outright.

"No wonder you are astonished, mother," he told her. "This is really Miss Randall, the girl who was drowned. It's a great secret, and we shall tell you all about it later. Don't ask too many questions now, for we are too happy to answer them, are we not, Jess?"

The latter smiled and pressed Mrs. Hampton's hand more firmly. Then her eyes became moist, and a tear stole down her cheek. At once Mrs. Hampton aroused to action, and dropping upon her knees by the sofa she put her arms lovingly about the girl and kissed her upon the lips. Her heart was too full for utterance. This was her own child, she had no doubt about that now. Her dream was fulfilled in a wonderful manner. She looked into the clear eyes, drank in the beauty of her face, and stroked her soft hair. So this was her own child, the one she had longed to behold for so many years. She was with her at last. But the girl must never know. She must never call her "mother." The thought

was terrible. Her own daughter, and yet not her own. She had sold her for money, and how she would spurn her should she ever hear of it. It was almost more than she could endure. In her confusion she tried to say something, to utter words of welcome. But all in vain. A feeling of helplessness and despair swept upon her, so throwing her arms impulsively about the girl's neck, and burying her face upon her breast, she sobbed as if her heart would break. The maddening tension of long years had at last given way, and tears, unknown before, brought a blessed relief.

CHAPTER XVII

CAPTAIN SAM'L GOES HOME

AS Mrs. Tobin walked with her husband from the shore the evening she took him off the "Eb and Flo," she maintained a rigid silence. The captain was well accustomed to this mood, and it always affected him more than the scolding. He knew then that his wife's anger was more than ordinary, and it was necessary for him to use all the diplomacy at his command.

"I've been thinkin', Martha, that you need a holiday," he at length ventured. "Ye haven't taken one fer a long time now. A trip to Fredericton would do ye a world of good. Yer nephew wrote fer ye to come an' see him."

Mrs. Tobin, however, was not inclined to discuss this subject, dear though it was to her heart. She had often planned such a trip, but she had something more serious to think about just now. She strode rapidly forward, causing the captain to puff at a great rate in his effort to keep up with her. He became annoyed.

"Say, Martha," he panted. "I'm not used to sich a gait as this, even if you are. Yer hittin' the ground so fast an' hard with them boots of yours that it's gittin' hot. I kin almost see the grass smokin'. Phew, I'm all in!" He slowed down, pulled out his handkerchief, and mopped his brow. "Go on, if ye want to. I'll be home after a while."

This appeal had some effect, for Mrs. Tobin stayed her steps a little.

"Thar, that's better, Martha," the captain encouraged. "Ye kin slow up when ye want to. I wish to goodness ye'd slow up in other ways. Ye've been settin' me a lively pace ever since we was married, an' it's gittin' faster every year. Me heart can't stand much more, so if yer not keerful ye'll be lookin' around fer another husband before long. But I pity him, poor chap, an' if I only knew who he might be I'd give him a note of warnin' while I'm in the flesh."

It was quite evident that Mrs. Tobin was longing to express her feelings in no uncertain language, but as she had made up her mind to treat Samuel with silent contempt, it would not do to make any reply. She was greatly agitated, however, to find that this method was not so effective as in the past. Her husband was getting beyond her, and it worried her a great deal.

The captain was not slow to notice this, and it pleased him. He wondered why he had allowed her to ride rough-shod over him for so long. Perhaps a little more such treatment might break her spell.

"Martha," he continued, "if ever ye marry agin after I'm dead, I'll come back to ye from the spirit world. I'll be so anxious to see how ye git along with yer new husband that nuthin' could keep me from comin'."

He ceased and glanced at his wife to note the effect of this startling announcement. But no change in her attitude could he observe.

"I'll come, Martha," he went on, "when yer least expectin' me, mebbe in the night, an' when ye open yer eyes ye'll see me standin' before ye. If ye never had a creepy feelin' before, ye'll have one then. Yer hair'll stand right on end, an' yer blood'll about freeze in yer veins. An' I'll step right up to the side of yer bed, an' look straight into yer eyes, an' hold out me hands——"

The captain never finished his sentence, for with a bound Martha had left him. She ran as he had never

seen her run before, and by the time he reached the house she was in the kitchen, and did not even look at him as he entered. The table was set for supper, but Flo was nowhere to be seen. Mrs. Tobin busied herself about the stove, while the captain washed himself at the sink. He was hungry, for not even his wife's anger could take away his hearty appetite. Some cold lamb on the table appealed to him, and he was about to sit down and help himself when the kitchen door was suddenly opened and Flo burst into the room. She was greatly excited, and was about to announce some startling bit of news when her mother checked her. She thrust her hand into a pocket in her dress, and held up the side-comb for inspection. The captain stood transfixed, staring upon the innocent cause of his wife's wrath.

"Look at that," Mrs. Tobin, cried, holding it out before her daughter. "Is it any wonder that I'm heart-broken?"

The girl's eyes grew wide with amazement as she glanced first at the comb, and then at her father and mother. She surmised at once that there was trouble between them, but what the comb had to do with it she could not understand.

"Why, mother," Flo at last found voice to say, "I don't see anything wrong about that comb. It's mine. I must have left it in the cabin the last time I came up the river. I knew I had lost it, but could not tell where."

With a whoop of joy the captain sprang forward, and caught his daughter in his arms.

"Bully fer you, Flo!" he shouted. "Ye've saved me neck all right this time, an' I shan't fergit it soon. Ye'll have a new dress, by gum, ye will. Ho, ho, Martha," and he turned to his discomfited wife, "ye thought that I was entertainin' ladies on the 'Eb an' Flo,' didn't ye? An' it was all on account of that comb. Ha, ha, that's a good one."

"Hold your tongue, Sam'l." Mrs. Tobin had at last found her voice. "I admit that I was mistaken about the comb, but I want to know why you didn't stop on your way up river? I really believe there's something wrong with your mind, Sam'l. I never heard you speak to me the way you did on the boat, and then coming to the house you talked such nonsense about dying, and appearing to me from the spirit world. You haven't been drinking, have you?"

Before the captain could reply Flo interposed. She was bubbling over with excitement, and her parents' troubles did not concern her in the least. She was too well accustomed to such scenes to take them seriously to heart.

"Mother," she began, "there's a girl visiting the Hamptons, and I believe she and John are engaged."

This startling announcement had a profound effect upon Mrs. Tobin. Whatever took place across the road was of special interest to her. She sat down suddenly upon the nearest chair, and stared at her daughter. Flo laughed outright at her mother's excitement.

"That's more interesting than the comb, isn't it?" she bantered. "But it's true. I saw her myself, and my, she's beautiful!"

"A girl visiting the Hamptons!" Mrs. Tobin slowly repeated, "and engaged to John! Are you sure? When did you hear all this?"

"I was just over there, and saw things for myself. You don't need to have your eyes and ears very wide open in that house to understand how she and John love each other."

"Who is she, for pity's sake? and where did she come from? I never knew that John had a girl."

"Neither did I, mother. But if you saw them together you would have no doubt about it. They seem to be so happy. John brought her in his car last night.

She met with an accident somewhere, and she has a bandage across one side of her forehead."

"Met with an accident!" Mrs. Tobin exclaimed. "In what way?"

"I have no idea, and I didn't like to ask."

"Didn't like to ask!" Mrs. Tobin sniffed in disgust. "If I'd been in your place I would have found out everything. You don't even know her name, I suppose."

"Oh, yes, I found that out. It's a funny one, Betty Bean."

During this conversation the captain had been rubbing his hands vigorously with the towel. He had to be doing something, so this was just as well as anything else. When he learned that a visitor was at the Hamptons, and that she had met with an accident, he began to fear the worst. Who else could it be but the girl he had taken up river on his boat? But when he heard that her name was Betty Bean he was greatly relieved, hung up the towel, and started for the table. The girl interested him no longer, and it did not matter to him whether John Hampton had a sweetheart or not.

"Come on, an' let's have supper," he ordered. "I'm 'most starved. One would think from the way you two talk that thar is a menagerie over the way. I don't care how many girls John has."

"But I care," his wife retorted. "And what's more, I'm going over this very night to see her myself. You are away from home so much, Sam'l, that you see people and have a good time. But with me it's different. I have to stay right here week in and week out, and see nothing but the same things and the same people. It isn't very often we have a visitor here, especially at the Hamptons. Yes, I'm going over to see and hear what I can."

"Yer right, Martha," the captain agreed. "Ye sartinly do need a change, an' as I told ye comin' from the

shore ye must take that trip to Fredericton. It'll do ye a world of good. Flo kin come with me fer a trip, an' it'll be nice to have her to look after things an' cook fer us."

"And leave another comb to give you trouble, daddy," the girl replied, while her eyes twinkled with merriment.

"Sure, sure, I don't mind how many combs ye leave, so long as yer mother lets me alone afterwards."

When supper was ended, Mrs. Tobin rose from the table.

"Come, Sam'l, fix yourself up," she ordered, "and let us go over to see that girl."

"But I'm not goin'," the captain protested. "I'm not anxious to see her an' John spoonin'. I want to stay right here at home, an' have a quiet smoke all to meself. You an' Flo go along. I'll look after the dishes."

"Indeed you won't stay, Sam'l. You're going, too. You haven't seen Mrs. Hampton for some time, and it's good for you to be neighbourly. She won't like it one bit if you don't come. So hurry up with your smoke, and then get ready."

"Fiddlesticks!" the captain growled as he hunted for his pipe. "I haven't been home fer days, and then when I do git here ye hustle me right away agin."

"And you wouldn't be here now if I hadn't brought you," was the retort. "You're getting more obstinate every day, Sam'l Tobin. I don't know what's coming over you."

"Sense, Martha, jist common sense. I'm seein' things in a new light. Every time I come home ye keep naggin' so much at me that I'm always glad when I git on board the boat agin. I wish to goodness I was thar now. Wonder how Eben's makin' out."

"Most likely he's asleep," Flo laughingly replied. "I'd like to go on board and surprise him. Wouldn't

it be fun? May I, mother? You and daddy go to Mrs. Hampton's without me."

"Indeed you'll do no such a thing," her mother sharply replied. "We don't want another drowning accident here like that one at Benton's wharf."

"But I don't want to drown myself, mother. I'm not like that poor unfortunate girl. She was running away from a man who wanted to marry her. Do you think I'd do such a foolish thing as that? Indeed I wouldn't. I wish that Lord Somebody-or-other would come my way. I'm sure I wouldn't drown myself to get clear of him. He wouldn't get rid of me so easily. I wonder what it feels like to have a Lord's son in love with you. I think it would be great."

"Don't talk such nonsense, Flo," Mrs. Tobin chided. "Men are deceivers, and the less you have to do with them the better. Just think of that poor girl who drowned herself. No doubt she found out what that Lord's son was like, and rather than marry him she ended her life. Did you hear whether they found her body, Sam'l?"

The captain gave a guilty start, coughed, and stared at his wife. He was afraid she would ask this question.

"No, I guess they didn't find her, Martha. They was searchin' the river when we pulled out from Benton's. I haven't heard anything since. She's Henry Randall's daughter, I believe."

"And his wife, Sam'l, was old Silas Parks' daughter. He was the real estate man who sold that bed of rocks to Mr. Hampton. She was worth a pile of money when she married Randall."

"Yes, an' I guess she's worth more to-day, Martha. She's a shrewd one, all right, an' as close-fisted as her dad. My, it was a caution the way he took Hampton in on that place. It really isn't worth five cents."

"But there's coal on it, though, Sam'l, an' that should be worth a great deal."

"Coal, ha, ha. Yes, thar's coal, but what good is it way back in the hills? John can't git anybody to touch it, though he's been tryin' hard. It's too fer from the river. I do feel sorry fer John. He's a decent feller, an' if he could only git that notion about the coal out of his head he might be good fer something. He's not much at farmin'."

"And to think of him getting married, Sam'l! How on earth will he support a wife? It's as much as he and his mother can do to get along as it is, though many think they are well off. But, then, that's none of our business. He can marry anyone he likes for all I care. I only want to know what she looks like, and where she comes from. If she's to be our neighbour, I want to find out all I can about her. So, hurry up and get ready. I'll help Flo with the dishes."

CHAPTER XVIII

HARD LUCK

AS the Tobins drew near the Hampton home, they heard the sound of music accompanied by singing. They stopped at the foot of the verandah steps and listened. The blind of the parlour window was up, and they could see Mrs. Hampton at the piano, with John and the fair visitor standing by her side. It was an old familiar song they were singing, and it sounded especially sweet to the three listeners outside.

"Say, I haven't heard anything like that fer years," the captain remarked. "It strikes me jist right. Let's stay here."

"We shall do no such thing," his wife replied. "It's not good manners."

"Isn't she pretty?" Flo whispered. "And how happy she and John seem to be."

Mrs. Tobin made no reply, but led the way up the steps, knocked at the door, opened it and walked in. This was her usual custom, and Mrs. Hampton always did the same when she visited the Tobins. The music and singing suddenly ceased as the visitors entered, and an expression of annoyance swept for an instant over John's face as he turned and saw Mrs. Tobin standing in the doorway.

"Excuse us for interrupting you," the latter began, "but we thought we'd make a neighbourly call to-night since Sam'l's home. We're all anxious to meet your company."

Mrs. Hampton had now left the piano and was advancing to meet her neighbours. She, too, was annoyed, for she knew only too well how Mrs. Tobin would make every effort to ferret out the secret of Miss Randall's presence. But as they had come, she had to make the best of it.

"It is thoughtful of you to come over," she replied. "We were enjoying a little music. This is Miss Bean, Mrs. Tobin. I feel sure you will be pleased to meet her."

Mrs. Tobin at once stepped forward and reached out her hand.

"Very glad I am to make your acquaintance, Miss. It's not often we see a stranger in this place. I hope you'll come over to see us."

Jess took Mrs. Tobin's hand in hers and was about to reply, when, happening to glance across the room, she saw the captain standing near the door. She recognised him at once, and her face turned white, while her body trembled. Mrs. Tobin believed that this agitation was due to her strenuous grip, and she quickly dropped the girl's hand.

"Excuse me, Miss," she apologised. "I didn't intend to hurt you. But when I shake hands I mean it. Now, some people just touch the tips of your fingers as if they were afraid you'd bite. That may be the fashionable way, but I like the good old handshake."

"I never let you shake hands with me, Mrs. Tobin," John laughingly told her. "I know you too well."

"And I guess you should," was the retort. "You often felt my hands when you were a boy, didn't you? I had to use them more than once, especially when you took my apples."

"Come, come, Mrs. Tobin, you must not give me away. Let us forget the past. I want the captain to meet Miss Bean. He looks as if he would like to run away. Come

here, sir. You were always nervous in the presence of women, I know. But Miss Bean is perfectly harmless."

John was well aware why the captain wished to get out of the house. Knowing Mrs. Tobin as well as he did, he felt certain that her husband was most anxious to keep from her the story of his experience with Miss Randall on the "Eb and Flo." It amused him, and yet he felt it was his duty not only to the captain but to Jess as well not to divulge the secret. He had noticed the girl's white face and trembling hands, and surmised the cause.

The captain was indeed in a quandary. At the first glimpse of Miss Randall he was seized with a great fear. How could he face her in the presence of his wife? Would she recognise him, and call him by name? If she did, then he would be at once amid serious breakers on a stormy shore. He wanted to retreat, to get away from the house as fast as possible. But there was no escape, for he heard John telling him to come and meet the young woman. For a few seconds he stood as if rooted to the floor, staring straight before him. Notwithstanding her own agitation, Jess could hardly keep from smiling at the captain's confusion. She felt sorry for him, so acting upon the impulse of the instant, she crossed the room and held out her hand.

"I am very glad to meet you, Captain," she began. "You have a boat of your very own, so I understand. You will take me for a trip on the river some day, will you not? I have always longed for a sail in a wood-boat."

"Sure, sure, Miss, I'll take ye," the captain replied, much delighted at her action. "But mebbe ye'd better ask me wife. She's mighty pertic'ler who I take sailin', 'specially when it comes to women."

"Oh, I am sure Mrs. Tobin won't mind," Jess assured. "She's too sensible, I know. And, besides, I'm quite young."

A grim smile overspread Mrs. Tobin's face as she listened to this conversation. She was pleased with the girl, and anxious to learn more about her.

"I don't mind Sam'l taking you on the boat," she said, "and if you live along the river you can go with him as well as not. But I never heard of the Bean family before. I know about most of the people from St. John to Fredericton."

"Miss Bean's home is in the city," John explained. "She was visiting some friends at the quarry, and was hit on the head by a stone. I happened to be there at the time, and so brought her home with me last night. You heard about that other accident there, I suppose?"

"No; what accident?"

"A truck load of stone with two men on board struck a cow, which was standing on the track. The cow was killed, and one of the men was badly hurt."

"My, oh, my!" Mrs. Tobin exclaimed. "I never heard the like of such things as are taking place these days. With that poor girl drowned at Benton's wharf, another injured at the quarry, a cow killed, and a man hurt. The world must surely be coming to an end, for the Bible says there will be terrible things happening in the last days."

"Oh, I guess the world will wag along for some time yet," John laughingly replied. "Wouldn't you like to hear some music, Mrs. Tobin?"

They were all seated now, the captain as near the door as possible, that he might beat a hasty retreat should the situation become too embarrassing. He breathed more freely when music was mentioned.

"Let's have something lively, John," he suggested. "I haven't heard a real break-down fer a long time. Give us 'We won't go home 'til mornin',' or something like that."

"Sam'l, Sam'l," his wife protested. "I'm surprised

at you. With so many terrible things happening around us, we should have hymns instead of songs. I'd like to have 'Oh, Day of Wrath, that Dreadful Day.' That's far more appropriate."

"Ugh!" the captain grunted. "That hymn 'ud give anyone the blues. What's the use of dyin' before yer time? But if ye want to sing hymns, let's start off with 'Here I'll Raise my Ebenezer.' It's a dandy, an' about the only one I know. But fer pity sakes, cut out the 'Day of Wrath.' I know too much about that already. Sometimes we have the night of wrath as well as the day at our house, eh, Martha?"

Everybody in the room smiled except Mrs. Tobin. She was deeply offended, and her wrath was about to descend when a distant roll of thunder startled her. The captain chuckled as he saw its effect upon his wife. He knew how a thunder storm always frightened her. In fact, it was about the only thing of which she was afraid.

"Guess the Day of Wrath's comin', Martha, sooner than ye expected," he chuckled. "Thar it is agin, an' nearer this time."

Mrs. Hampton rose and closed the window. Just at that instant a vivid flash of lightning almost blinded her, followed immediately by a terrific crash which shook the house. Mrs. Tobin screamed and leaped from her chair.

"Oh, oh!" she moaned. "Isn't it awful! We'll all be killed!"

"Ah, keep still, Martha," the captain chided. "We're all right. It's mighty lucky we have sich a comfortable place as this. Now, if we were out on the river——"

He suddenly ceased, while an expression of consternation swept across his face. A peculiar gurgle escaped his lips as he seized his hat and sprang to his feet.

"The 'Eb an' Flo'!" he gasped. "I fergot all about

her, an' the sail's up! That boy'll be asleep, an' won't hear the storm. Oh, Lord!"

The next minute he was out of the house, and hurrying as fast as he could toward the shore. He had gone but a short way when the rain struck him, and soon he was drenched to the skin. He could only direct his course by the flashes of lightning, and after each illumination the darkness was more intense than ever. As he neared the shore, he stopped and peered anxiously forward, and by the next vivid streak which followed a terrific crash, he caught one fleeting glimpse of the "Eb and Flo." She was still there, and her sail was down. He breathed a sigh of relief, and again started forward toward the small boat pulled upon the shore. He had taken but a few steps, however, when his foot caught and twisted upon a root, causing him to fall heavily forward full upon his face. With a cry of distress, he scrambled to his feet, and tried to stand, but so severe was the pain that he was forced to sink down again upon the ground. That he had wrenched his ankle, he was certain, and he groaned whenever he moved. But he must reach the "Eb and Flo," for the storm was increasing in violence, and he was sure that the boat could not hold up against such a tempest. He tried to crawl in his endeavour to reach the shore. The perspiration stood out in beads upon his forehead as he worked himself along, but so intense was the pain in his foot that ere long he was forced to give up in despair. And as he lay there he kept his eyes fixed in the direction of the river, catching brief glimpses of the "Eb and Flo" as she tugged hard at her anchor.

A more vivid gleam than formerly presently illuminated the river, and as the captain looked, he emitted a hoarse cry. The boat was drifting! She was farther from the shore he could plainly tell. Then blackness closed down once again, leaving the helpless man racked

with the agony of suspense. The next flash revealed the boat farther away, with sail up, and to all appearance being driven full upon the opposite shore.

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned. "She's done fer now! An' it's high tide, too! We'll never git her off them mud flats! How in time did Eben hist that sail in sich a storm? Why, it was all that both of us could do when it was calm."

The storm now was at its height, and so incessant was the lightning that the captain could see nothing more of the boat so dazzling was the illumination. The rain pelted upon him, and at times he groaned with pain.

"Guess I'll have to spend the night here," he muttered. "This is the worst fix I ever got into. Wish to goodness I could git some word to Martha. But she'll think I'm on board that boat by this time. I wonder what she'd say if she knew I was layin' here, helpless as a log. But, then, it might be worse. I'm alive, me leg ain't broke, an' the lightnin' hasn't hit me. I've got much to be thankful fer yet, even though the 'Eb an' Flo' does go on the flats. Old Parson Westmore used to say that when things got black always count yer blessin's, an' ye'll be surprised to find how many ye really have left. So cheer up, Sam'l Tobin, it'll take more'n a thunder storm an' a sprained ankle to knock ye out, blamed if it won't."

Under the inspiration of this resolve, he began to hum his favourite tune. It made him feel better, and soon he was singing at the top of his voice:

"Here I'll raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy grace I'll come,
And I trust in Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home."

"My, them's great words!" he ejaculated, when he had finished. They've put new life into me already.

Guess I'll sing 'em over agin. There's nuthin' like a song in the night fer a sprained ankle."

As he lay there the storm gradually beat itself out, and rolled away in the distance. From where he was lying he could look up at his own house. Often he had turned his eyes in that direction, hoping to see a light in the window. But not the faintest gleam appeared to cheer his loneliness, so he knew that Martha and Flo must have remained at the Hamptons. No doubt they would go home when the storm ceased. After what seemed to him hours, he was rewarded by the sight of a light flickering among the trees. It was a lantern, he was certain, and he knew that John must be showing the visitors home. He watched it longingly as it neared the house. Could he make himself heard? Rising with difficulty to his knees, he lifted up his voice in several loud calls for help. Then he watched, while his heart beat fast within him. Again he called, and the light suddenly stopped. This was encouraging, so with a great effort he gave one more mighty whoop, ere he sank back exhausted upon the ground.

CHAPTER XIX

THE CAPTAIN GIVES ADVICE

"I CAN'T really tell ye how it happened, Martha."

The captain was lying on the sofa in the sitting-room, with his injured foot resting on a pillow. His wife had applied hot cloths to the ankle, and rubbed it well with liniment.

"You must have tripped on something, Sam'l, as you were running," she remarked. "It's a wonder you weren't killed. I hope to goodness you won't get cold. Why, you were soaked to the skin."

"An' I might have been struck with lightnin', Martha. Jist think of that."

"Indeed you might. Or you might have broken your leg."

"Or cracked me rib," the captain growled. "But I didn't, so what's the use of worryin' about things that didn't happen. I'm here, with nuthin' worse than a sprained ankle. You an' Flo had better go to bed. I'm all right now. I want to stay right by this winder, so's I kin see the river as soon as it gits light enough. I'm anxious to know whar the 'Eb an' Flo' is aground. She must be hard on by this time. Wonder how Eben's makin' out."

"The poor boy must be greatly worried, Sam'l. Maybe he'll come home before morning."

"Mebbe he will, Martha. I never thought of that. But he'll not worry about the loss of the boat. Most likely he'll be glad, fer he doesn't take much to the

water. I don't know what we're goin' to do with that boy."

"But what will you do without the boat, Sam'l? It's our only means of living, and with that gone we'll starve."

"Oh, I guess we'll pull through somehow. I'll git the boat afloat when her load's taken off, if she isn't too hard an' fast on them mud flats. My, it was sartinly some gale last night! I've been boatin' on this river fer over twenty-five years, an' I never saw anything like it. I thought mebbe you an' Flo intended to stay at the Hamptons all night. It was mighty lucky fer me, though, that ye didn't."

"Mrs. Hampton coaxed us to stay, but I wanted to get home. I had a peculiar feeling that something was the matter."

"An' didn't ye have a more peculiar feelin', Martha, when ye heard me yell? I imagined at first that ye didn't hear me."

"I really thought it was a dog howling, Sam'l. It was Flo who said it was a man calling for help. I then knew that it must be you. My, we had a job getting you to the house. We never could have done it if John hadn't been with us."

"It's a wonder he could leave his sweetheart long enough to come with ye, Martha. Did ye find out anything more about her?"

"Nothing. Mrs. Hampton banged on the piano, while John and the girl sang until my head ached. I believe they did it so I wouldn't ask any more questions. I really think there is something mysterious about Miss Bean. What was she doing at the quarry? How did she happen to get hurt? And how did John come to get so well acquainted with her? Mark my word, I shall find out all about her."

Little sleep came to the captain that night, and the

hours wore slowly away. He had insisted that his wife and daughter should go to bed. Their presence annoyed him. He wanted to be alone that he might think, for he was more worried about the "Eb and Flo" than he would openly acknowledge. He was getting along in years, and boating was the only thing he could do to make enough to provide for his family. He could not afford to buy or build another craft for the season's work, not even a scow, so if the "Eb and Flo" could not be saved, he did not know what to do. His only hope lay in a heavy rain which would cause the river to rise enough to float the boat. That, however, was not a very bright outlook, for such a boon could hardly be expected during the summer. It was only in the fall when the heavy rains set in, and then it would be too late for much work. And besides, he would lose the carrying of the stones from the quarry. There was not much cord-wood to be taken to the city, and most of the lumber from the mills was now being freighted in scows.

And thus he watched and waited, his anxious thoughts, and the pain in his foot driving all sleep from his eyes. Eagerly he listened to the clock as it ticked on the shelf across the room, and struck out the heavy-footed hours. Never did any night seem so long. Often he had sailed on the river from sunset to sunrise, and thought nothing of it. He had something to occupy his attention then. But now he had nothing to do but lie there and wait.

When at last the first faint signs of dawn began to steal into the room, the captain lifted himself to a sitting position and looked out of the window. But nothing could he see, for the river still lay enwrapped in the shadows of the hills beyond. Impatiently he waited, and at length he was enabled to view quite clearly the water as it stretched out before him. Eagerly his eyes searched for the "Eb and Flo," but not a sign of her could he behold. Nothing but the flats on the other side of the

river met his view. What did it all mean? he asked himself. Where was the boat? A mingled feeling of curiosity, hope and anxiety possessed him, and only with the greatest difficulty could he restrain his impatience until his wife came downstairs.

"She's gone, Martha!" he shouted, as soon as his wife entered the room. "She's nowhere in sight."

"What! The boat?" Mrs. Tobin replied, as she hurried to the window and peered out. She stood for a few seconds, looking up and down the river. Then she turned to her husband with an anxious expression upon her face.

"Do you suppose she's sunk, Sam'l?"

"Sunk; no. If she'd gone down, Eben would have come ashore in the tender. Mebbe he's managed to git her under way, an' taken her down river. Ye kin never tell what that boy might do. Jist scoot over an' ask John to go to the store an' phone to the city. Tell him to call up Jimmy Gault at Injuntown. He's a good friend of mine, an' he'll know if the 'Eb an' Flo's' down."

"Wait until after breakfast, Sam'l. The store won't be open yet. How's your foot?"

"Pretty bad, Martha. But I guess it'll be all right if the 'Eb an' Flo's' safe. Give me me pipe, will ye? I'd like a smoke to soothe me nerves."

It seemed to the captain that the time would never pass until John returned from the store and reported that Eben had reached the city early that morning, and all was well.

"Thank the Lord!" the captain fervently exclaimed. "I kin rest in peace now. But I wonder how the boy done it. How in time he histed that sail is a mystery to me."

"Perhaps it was never lowered," his wife suggested. "You left it up, didn't you?"

"I know I did, but I saw it go down as sure as I'm

alive. Then when I looked agin, it was up, an' the boat was adrift, making fer them mud flats. What d'ye think of that?"

"What do you suppose saved her from going aground, Sam'l?"

"It must have been the Lord, Martha. It was nuthin' more'n a miracle that kept that boat from goin' on hard an' fast. That boy could never have histed that sail alone an' taken the 'Eb an' Flo' down the river in sich a gale."

"Maybe there was an angel with him, Sam'l, such as stood with St. Paul long ago."

"Mebbe so, Martha. I've been thinkin' of that, an' it gives one a kind of comfortin' feelin', doesn't it?"

All day long the captain remained upon the sofa. His foot pained him a great deal, but he never complained. His wife tended him most faithfully, and never scolded him once. She was more gentle than he had ever known her to be, and when the paper arrived from the post office she read to him the news of the day. An article about the unsuccessful search for the body of Miss Randall was of the greatest interest, and Mrs. Tobin read it through very carefully. The captain listened attentively, expecting every minute to hear an expression of doubt as to the girl's death. He lay staring straight before him when his wife had finished. A feeling possessed him that he should tell Martha what he knew. It would relieve his mind, and at the same time explain the presence of the girl across the way. But would she keep the secret? or would she consider it her bounden duty to send word to the girl's parents? He was almost certain that she would take the latter course, and this made him hesitate.

As he was pondering over this, Mrs. Hampton and Jess Randall came to the house to see him. They were anxious to know how he was getting along, and Mrs.

Hampton had brought a bottle of her choicest jam for his special benefit.

"It is sartinly good of yez to come," he told them. "Martha was entertainin' me by readin' the paper. It helps pass the time."

"I was just reading about that poor girl who drowned herself," Mrs. Tobin explained. "Have you seen it, Miss?"

The girl's hands trembled slightly as she took the paper, and ran her eyes rapidly over the article. Her face turned somewhat pale as she read, and her heart beat fast. It was not the first time that the seriousness of the situation had come into her mind. But she had always excused herself by the justness of her cause. Any girl with the least spark of spirit would do the same, she reasoned. Her parents had no right to force her to marry a man she hated. But the thought of the men searching for her body was horrible. What would the papers say if the truth became known, as it surely would in time? She was much relieved, however, to learn that no one suspected that she was alive, not even her parents. Anyway, she had taken matters into her own hands, and she did not intend to turn back now. She longed to speak to the captain alone, and this opportunity was soon afforded when Mrs. Tobin took Mrs. Hampton into the garden to show her some special flowers. Thus the captain and Jess were left together for a few minutes.

"Oh, Captain, I want to thank you for your kindness," the girl impetuously began. "I was almost frightened out of my senses when I saw you last night."

"So I looked as bad as all that, did I?" The captain chuckled as he looked at his fair visitor. "No, Miss, I wouldn't give ye away. But I was afraid that Martha might pump the secret out of ye."

"And you will keep the secret, won't you?" the girl

pleaded. "You will not tell anyone, not even your wife?"

"I'll try to, Miss," and the captain sighed. "But Eben knows, and I'm expectin' him home shortly. How did ye git that cut on yer head?" he suddenly asked.

"Why, don't you know?" and Jess looked her surprise. "A stone came through the window as John and I were sitting by that injured man at the quarry."

"But who threw the stone?"

"I have not the least idea. John wanted to have a search made at the quarry in order to find the one who did it. But I would not let him. I was afraid it would make too much talk, and it might get into the papers."

"D'ye intend to stay here, Miss?" the captain asked. "Yer dad's sure to know of yer whereabouts, even though ye call yerself Betty Bean. How in time did ye think of sich a name as that?"

Jess laughed, although her eyes expressed anxiety.

"I am afraid I cannot stay here long, Captain. But I wish I could. Mrs. Hampton seems just like my own mother, she is so kind and loving. Perhaps you will take me again on your boat. That is the safest place I can think of now."

"I guess ye wouldn't find it very safe thar, Miss. It served as a refuge fer a time, but please don't try it on agin, unless ye want to git me into trouble."

Jess smiled, more at the peculiar expression on the captain's face than at his words of warning. She understood perfectly well what he meant, for she had met his wife. For a few seconds there was silence. Then the captain looked into the bright face before him, and his eyes twinkled.

"Say, Miss," he began, "I know a fine way out of yer difficulty. It's a great one, an' jist stuck me all of a sudden."

"You do! Oh, I knew you would help me."

"Yes, it's the only way I kin see," the captain continued. "It will keep yer parents from forcin' ye to marry that Lord's son. They can't touch ye if ye jist foller my advice."

"I will, Captain. Just tell me what to do."

"Git married."

"Oh!" The girl gave a great start, while her face crimsoned.

"Didn't expect that, eh?" and the captain chuckled. "Took ye kinder by surprise?"

"Indeed it did. And I'm afraid I can't take your advice. Why, I've run away to escape getting married."

"Ah, that's all right, Miss. Ye ran away to escape one man, but I guess thar's another ye won't run away from. Isn't that true? Thar now, ye needn't blush an' git all confused. I'm old enough to be yer grandfather, so ye needn't git upsot at what I say. I'm only speakin' fer yer good. Marry John Hampton, an' then ye won't have to worry any more about marryin' that Lord Stick-in-the-Mud. John's a real nice feller, an' I guess you like him as well as he likes you."

"But, Captain, I couldn't marry John," Jess protested. "In fact, he hasn't even asked me to marry him."

"He hasn't! John hasn't asked ye to marry him?" The captain's surprise and indignation were so great that he sat bolt upright. Then he sank back with a groan. "Blame that foot!" he growled. "I fergot all about it. An' no wonder. To think that John hasn't asked ye to marry him. What in thunder has he been doin', then?"

Before the girl could reply, the women returned, and in a few minutes she and Mrs. Hampton left the house. Jess was pleased at the interruption, for the conversation was becoming embarrassing. Nevertheless, she thought

more of the captain for his friendly words of advice, and cherished them in the depth of her heart. She knew that they were true, and that to marry the man she loved would free her from all annoyance of Donaster.

There was great excitement the next day in the Tobin family when "The Daily Courier" arrived. It had a full account of the thrilling experience of rescuing the "Eb and Flo" at the brink of the falls. Mrs. Tobin read it aloud, while the captain and Flo listened with intense interest. At times the former interrupted with exclamations of surprise. He was more excited than his wife had ever seen him, and he could hardly restrain himself from leaping from the sofa and prancing around the room.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" he thundered, when his wife had finished, and laid aside the paper. "Why in time didn't Eben tie up at some wharf instead of goin' through the Narrows when the tide was runnin' down? That boy hasn't enough brains to last him over night."

"Don't talk that way, Sam'l," his wife chided. "No doubt the poor boy was doing the best he could. He must have used his brains when he saved the boat from going on the mud flats."

"Sure, sure, Martha. Yer quite right. But, say, what a narrow squeeze that was! In another minute Eben an' the boat would have been into the falls, an', then, Good Lord!"

"Doesn't the paper say there were two men with him?" Flo asked. "Who were they, do you suppose?" The girl's face was pale, and she was greatly agitated.

"Yes, yes, it does say thar were two men, who left in a motor-boat," the captain replied. "Now, who were they? D'ye s'pose they were on the boat when the storm struck, an' helped Eben hist the sail? They must have been thar, fer that boy could never have histed that sail alone. Read it all over agin, Martha."

The Tobin family had now a great subject for conversation, which kept them talking and speculating for the rest of the day. Mrs. Tobin carried the paper to her neighbours across the way, and discussed it with them. Jess said very little, although she was doing some serious thinking. Two men were with Eben, and they had evidently been with him during the storm. Fearful as she was of being followed, she naturally concluded that they were in search of her. Perhaps there was a suspicion abroad that she had taken refuge on the "Eb and Flo," and had not drowned herself. She said nothing, however, about her fears, but listened to Mrs. Tobin as she enlarged upon the danger through which her son had passed.

All through the afternoon the captain kept a close watch upon the river. He felt sure that Eben would bring the boat back that day. His foot was not giving him so much trouble, and he longed to be up and doing. But his wife and daughter would not allow him to leave the sofa, notwithstanding his vigorous protests.

"I must git around, Martha," he said after a special rebuke by his wife for his lack of patience. "Me foot needs to be moved, or it'll be stiff to the end of me days."

"Don't you worry about that, Sam'l. A sprain needs rest, and you're going to stay right where you are."

The captain sighed as he tried to possess his soul in patience. But the time dragged heavily, and the "Eb and Flo" was nowhere in sight.

Supper was almost ready when Flo, happening to glance out of the window, gave a cry of joy.

"The boat's coming now, daddy!" she announced. "I'm sure it's the 'Eb and Flo.' "

"Is thar a big patch in the sail?" her father asked.

"Yes, I can see it quite plainly."

"Then it's her, Flo. Thank the Lord Eben's come at

last. He's a great boy, that. Guess he'll amount to something after all. Ye'd better cut an extry slice of that ham, fer Eben'll have an appetite like a bear when he gits home."

CHAPTER XX

MRS. GRIMSBY'S MISSION

MRS. HAMPTON had not the slightest doubt but that Jess Randall was her own daughter. It seemed like a strange dream at first from which she would suddenly awaken. The girl was all that she had imagined her daughter would be when grown up. How she longed to take her in her arms and claim her as her own! But, no, she must not do that now. What would Jess and John think of her? Would they not despise her for what she had done? It was almost beyond belief that a mother would sell her child for money.

No sleep came to Mrs. Hampton's eyes during the rest of the night, and when Jess was comfortably in bed and asleep the restless woman paced up and down her own room, racked with conflicting emotions. What should she do? she asked herself over and over again. She knew now that the girl had run away from home, and should she send her back? But how could she? That she must keep her at all cost, was the thought uppermost in her mind. She was her own child, a part of her very self. The girl had been wonderfully brought to her, and was it not a sign that she should stay? But what about the girl's foster parents? Could they claim her still?

Twice during the quiet morning hours Mrs. Hampton had stolen gently into the girl's room and stood watching her as she slept. She could see her plainly by the shaded lamp on the dresser. A deep feeling of pride

and love welled up in her heart as she looked upon the fair, pure face. She was certain she could detect the father's features in forehead, mouth and chin. He had been a handsome man, and this girl resembled him in a marked degree.

During the second visit as she was about to leave the room Jess suddenly opened her eyes. Seeing Mrs. Hampton, a smile illumined her face.

"I have had such a beautiful dream," she said. "I dreamed that you were my mother, and that you were rescuing me from people who were trying to steal me away from you. Wasn't it funny?"

Mrs. Hampton gave a slight start, and looked searchingly into the girl's eyes. Then she knelt by her side and gave her a fervent kiss.

"Would you like to have me for your mother?" she asked.

"Would I! Oh, how glorious it would be! I have known you only a few hours, and yet you seem more like my mother than anyone I have ever met. You are so kind and loving, just what I have often longed my own mother to be like."

"She has been good to you, though, has she not?"

"Oh, yes. In a way she has been very good, though there was something lacking which I cannot explain. I never saw her look at me as you are looking at me now. I could never confide in her, nor go to her with my little troubles. She did not wish to be bothered. She was just as affectionate to our cat and dog as she was to me. But you are altogether different. I wonder why it is? I believe you really love me, and for love my heart has been longing for years."

"Then stay right here with us, dear," Mrs. Hampton replied, at the same time pressing the girl's hand in hers. "I want you to be my daughter, and I shall love you to your heart's content." She was going to add that John

would, too, but she refrained. Just what understanding there was between the two she was not sure, although she had the feeling that they loved each other dearly.

"But suppose daddy finds me here and takes me home?" Jess asked. "I feel that I should get farther away. I must not go back to my old life. I want to be free, to make my own living, and then——" She hesitated, and paused while her face crimsoned.

"I know, dear. You want to marry the one you love. Isn't that it?"

"It is, but how did you guess it?"

"Oh, I was young once, and understand such things," Mrs. Hampton smilingly told her. "But, there, we must not talk any more now. I am sorry that I disturbed you. Sleep as long as you like."

This was but one of many conversations the two had during the next day. While John was at work about the place, Mrs. Hampton and Jess talked with each other, either in the kitchen or out upon the verandah. Thus the two were drawn closer together, and understood each other better than before. Then in the evening, when the day's work was done, John joined them. He was happier than he had ever been in his life, and as he went about his various tasks he could hardly believe it possible that the one girl in the whole world who meant everything to him was but a short distance away, awaiting his return.

The more Mrs. Hampton thought about Jess, the more determined she became that nothing should take her from her. She was her daughter, and she had the right to her, no matter what she had done in the past. If it came to the worst she would claim her as her own, tell the whole sad story, and bear whatever blame might fall upon her.

She thought over this during the next day, and the more she was with the girl the more she loved her. The

fact that John's love was added to hers gave her much comfort. Nothing would please her better than to see them married. Then she would have both a son and a daughter. But would the girl's foster parents allow her to marry a man who was merely an ordinary country farmer? It was hardly likely, judging by their ambition to give her to the son of a Lord.

She was thinking of this as she worked in the kitchen, busily preparing supper. John and Jess had gone for a walk down to the river, expecting to be back in a short time. It was a beautiful evening, and as Mrs. Hampton watched them as they moved down across the field her heart filled with pride. She liked to see them together, for they were so happy, and seemed to be perfectly suited to each other.

When supper was ready, she went out upon the verandah to await their return. It was good to rest after the work of the day, and look out upon the river. Everything was full of peace, and if she could only bring herself in harmony with the world of nature how good it would be. The music of the birds, and the hum of bees sounded in her ears. But her brain was too much concerned about other affairs to enjoy the bright things around her. She felt restless, and a feeling of some impending calamity oppressed her. Perhaps it was the lack of sleep, for she had rested very little the last two nights.

The click of the little gate aroused her, and looking up she saw a little woman walking up the path toward the house. The visitor was shabbily dressed, and she hurried along as if fearful of being followed. She was panting heavily by the time she was upon the verandah, and seemed about ready to drop from weariness.

"Why, Hettie!" Mrs. Hampton exclaimed, as she rose to receive her. "What is the matter? You look tired out. Sit here, while I get you some refreshment."

"No, no, I mustn't sit down," the visitor replied, as she glanced apprehensively around. "Gabe might come at any minute. He's everywhere, it seems to me, and has eyes like a hawk."

"You just sit down and rest," Mrs. Hampton ordered, leading the frightened woman to a chair. "Your husband will not touch you here. If he does, it won't be well for him."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, so much. But you don't know Gabe as well as I do. He will kill me if he knows I've been here."

"Indeed he will do no such thing, Hettie. Sit here and calm your mind. I shall be back in a minute."

Mrs. Hampton hurried into the house, and in short time returned, carrying a small tray, containing a glass of home-made wine, and a plate of cake. This she placed on a small table near the agitated woman.

"Drink this, dear, and try some of my cake. They will refresh you."

Almost mechanically Mrs. Grimsby did as she was bidden, while Mrs. Hampton watched her curiously, wondering as to the cause of her excitement.

"Do you feel better now?" she asked, as the visitor replaced the glass upon the tray.

"Thank you, I do feel refreshed. But I must not stay long, though it is so comfortable here."

Thrusting her hand into the bosom of her dress, she brought forth a roll of bills, and laid it on Mrs. Hampton's lap.

"There, that's all I could find," she whispered. "He must have spent the rest."

"Why, what is this?" Mrs. Hampton asked in surprise as she picked up the money."

"It is yours; the money that Gabe took from you. Oh, he is a villain, if ever there was one. And to think that he should come to you, of all women, and demand

payment for silence. It's a wonder to me the Almighty doesn't smite him for his wickedness."

Mrs. Hampton now understood why this poor creature had visited her, and a deep respect and pity welled up in her heart.

"How did you know about this matter?" she asked.

"Oh, Gabe was boasting about it to me. He had been drinking, and when he is that way you never know what he will say. I took the money from him when he was asleep. He didn't miss it when he left home. But when he comes back there will be a terrible time."

"Where is he now?"

"In the city, where he likes to be, instead of staying home and attending to his work. He's not only a villain, but lazy as sin."

An anxious expression appeared in Mrs. Hampton's eyes as she listened to this tale of woe. She leaned over and touched her visitor on the arm.

"You say that your husband talks a great deal when he is drunk?" she asked.

"Yes, his tongue is never still unless he's asleep. It's awful the way he raves and swears at times."

"Hettie, do you suppose he will tell what he knows about what we did at the hospital."

"No, I'm quite sure he won't say a word about that," was the slow and thoughtful reply. "Gabe's as cunning as a fox, even when he's drunk."

"He told you about it, though."

"Ah, that's different. He knows that I understand all about it. But he won't say a word to anyone else. If he does, he won't get any more money. He's cute enough for that."

"And you think he will come to me for more money?"

"I am sure of it. He'll never let up until he drains you of the last cent, that is, if you let him. And you're not the only one."

"No?" Mrs. Hampton was becoming very curious now. "Does he work his game upon others?"

"I should say he does. There's another woman from whom he has got money, more than he got from you, and that's Mrs. Randall."

"Oh! Is she the—the woman who got my baby?"

"The very one. And Gabe was to her before he came to you. That's the way he's been acting, the villain."

Mrs. Hampton was silent for a few seconds. Her heart was beating fast. Now she knew for certain that Jess Randall was her own child. The last vestige of doubt had at last been removed.

"Why didn't you tell me this before, Hettie?" she asked.

"Tell you what?"

"That you were the Hettie Rawlins who was at the hospital when I was there, and that it was Mrs. Randall who got my baby."

"Because you didn't ask me. You never mentioned that affair, so I thought you had forgotten, or didn't want to speak about it."

"No, Hettie, I had not forgotten it. But I did not know it was you who exchanged the babies. I saw you only a few times at the hospital, and when I again met you years later as Mrs. Grimsby I did not recognise you. Oh, what would I not give to undo that terrible deed I committed! I must have been crazy to sell my baby for money."

"And I a fool for what I did. But I must have been entirely out of my mind when I told Gabe anything. I kept the secret for years, and then in one unguarded moment I let a few words slip from my lips. Gabe threatened my life, and gave me no peace until I told him all. I could not help it. If you only knew what a life I lead you would understand. Can you ever forgive me?"

"There is really nothing to forgive, Hettie," was Mrs. Hampton's sad reply. "I am the one who needs forgiveness, not only from you but from the child I so heartlessly sold. Did you ever see her?"

"No, not to my knowledge. But I understand her life was not happy, and so the poor thing drowned herself to escape from her misery. You have heard the news, I suppose?"

"Yes. There has been a great deal about it in the papers. Her body has not been found, has it?"

Mrs. Hampton tried to speak as unconcernedly as possible, and if Mrs. Grimsby had not been so much taken up with her own troubles she might have wondered why any mother could speak so coolly about the death of her own daughter, even though she had not seen her since she was a baby.

"No, her body has not been found yet, though men are searching for it all the time, so I understand," the visitor explained.

"Do her parents, I mean the Randalls, feel very badly about her death, Hettie?"

"In a way I suppose they do. But I have heard that they are more angry than anything else. Their minds were so set upon the girl marrying that Lord's son that they are greatly disappointed. I admire her for what she did. I wish I had done the same myself before I married Gabe Grimsby. My life has been a living death ever since. But, there, I have talked too long. I must hurry away home. I hope Gabe will never know that I have been here. He must think that he lost that money."

"You are not going to walk home, Hettie," Mrs. Hampton told her. "John will be back shortly, and he will take you in his car. It is too long a walk."

"But I must. You don't understand. What if Gabe comes home and finds me gone?"

"Where is he now, did you say?"

"In the city, so I believe."

"Very well, then, most likely he will stay there a few hours. If he comes, it will be on the 'Oconee,' and John can get you home before that. So you must stay. Come, let me take off your hat."

After considerable persuasion, Mrs. Hampton induced her visitor to remain. Then she went into the kitchen and placed the supper upon the table. She could not understand what was keeping John and Jess so long. Anyway, she and Hettie would have their tea, and the young people could have theirs by themselves. She believed that Hettie might feel somewhat embarrassed in the presence of Jess, owing to her shabby appearance.

They had just finished their supper, and were about to rise from the table when John entered the room. At the first sight of him Mrs. Hampton gave a cry of fright and rose to her feet. His forehead was marked with blood, and the face of the girl following him was as white as death.

CHAPTER XXI

EBEN COMES ASHORE

AS John and Jess made their way slowly down to the shore their hearts were free and happy. They were together, and that was all sufficient. Everything in nature was in harmony with their feelings. Birds chirped and flitted about them; butterflies zigzagged here and there, and bees hummed industriously among the flowers. The air was balmy, and a gentle breeze drifted in from the west. Jess stopped and looked out upon the river with kindling eyes.

"Oh, what a glorious day," she remarked. "It is so good to be in a place such as this."

"I am glad you like it," John replied, as he glanced at the bright face by his side. "I wish you could stay here always."

"So do I. The country suits me better than anywhere else."

"You would miss the city life, would you not, if you lived here all the year?"

"What would I miss in the city? A continual round of social events, of which I am more than tired, and going here and there in a vain effort to find happiness. I long to be free in the highest sense, and not to be chained to a system which to me is deadening."

"You certainly put your belief into practice when you ran away from home. I am glad you do not regret it."

"No, I have not the least regret. If I felt that my

parents are mourning for me I would feel badly. But they treated me so cruelly in trying to force me to marry the man I hate, that I do not care how they feel."

"But suppose they find out where you are and compel you to go home?"

"They may find me, but they cannot make me go back. I have tasted the joy of freedom from their rule, and shall henceforth think and act for myself. You may consider me ungrateful, but if you knew what my life has been like you would not blame me."

They had reached the border of a grove of small trees, and here in an old fence wild flowers flourished in abundance and ran riot over the moss-covered poles. Jess stooped, picked a wild rose, and inhaled its sweet fragrance. John, watching, thought he had never beheld a more perfect picture of beauty, grace and maidenly charm. His soul thrilled within him, and moving impulsively forward, he took the rose from her hand, and placed it gently in her hair. He smiled as he stepped back to view the effect.

"Excuse me," he apologised, "but I could not help it. That is the place for the rose; it makes you look great."

Then he caught her by the hand and led her down the narrow path which led to the water. Nearby stood a large tree, with great outspreading branches, and under this they stopped. John's heart was beating fast, while the girl's face almost equalled the rose in colour. The world and its cares were forgotten as they stood there on that bright summer afternoon. They were living in a world of their own, for love had cast its mystic charm over their young lives.

"Why need you leave this place?" John suddenly asked. "Why not stay here always? I want you, and must have you? Would you not be happy here with me?"

He was still holding her hand, which he now pressed

more firmly than ever. How he longed to take the girl in his arms, and imprint a kiss upon her rosy lips. He wanted to confess to her his great love, and to hear her tell of hers. But she did not at once reply. Her face, from which some of the colour had fled, was turned toward the river, and her hand trembled.

"Don't you know that I love you?" John impetuously insisted. "Can't you feel it in my every word and act? I love you as I never believed it possible to love any woman."

Then Jess looked into his eyes, and the expression the young man saw there filled his heart with joy.

"You do love me," he cried, "and you will be mine. Oh, tell me so!"

"Yes, John, I do love you," Jess slowly replied. "I love you more than words can tell. But we must wait a while. I am a runaway girl, you know, and I must not bring disgrace upon your family."

"Disgrace! I do not understand you. How could you bring disgrace upon mother and me?"

Jess smiled as she gently freed her hand, and plucked a leaf from the branch of a small tree. This she twirled in her fingers, and then tore it into bits, dropping each piece separately upon the ground.

"There is my answer," she said, in a voice that was low but full of emotion. "What I have done to that innocent leaf people will do to me when they find out what I have done. They will not spare me any more than I have spared that leaf. They will take my life and rend it asunder bit by bit. They will hear about my experiences on the 'Eb and Flo'; that a mishap befell me at the quarry; that I was taken away in the dead of night, and kept hidden by a young man so that my parents could not find me. I know what construction they will put upon all this, and no matter how much I might explain it will make no difference. I will be looked

upon as a girl who has gone astray, and will be held in contempt by all. Oh, I know how it will be, for I remember how people talked about a girl who did something not half so daring as mine, and she was never forgiven. Her character was torn into shreds by cruel tongues."

"But what has all this to do with our love?" John asked. "I don't care what people say. In fact, I will face the whole world, and if I hear anyone breathe a word against you it won't be well for him."

"I know you would do what you could, John, but not likely you would ever have the chance. What could you do against the many conversations where my name and deed will be introduced. And in what a subtle manner judgment will be pronounced. 'Poor girl; isn't it too bad?' 'How hard on her parents!' That is the way most people will refer to me, though some will express their views in no uncertain language. I have heard it before, and know just what to expect."

"But, Jess, why need we care what they say?" John insisted. "We can be happy together. Our love will make up for everything else."

"Yes, I know that, John. But until this storm blows over, and I am condemned and forgotten it is better for us to remain just as we are. I must get away from here and do something."

"You're not going to leave, Jess. You must stay right here."

But the girl shook her head. Her face was very serious, and her eyes shone with the light of determination.

"I must go, John," she said. "Should my father find me here, he will make my life unbearable. He will try to force me to go back, and the only way to prevent that would be for me to do what people think I have already done." A tremour shook her body, and her eyes grew big with a nameless fear.

"Your father shall not take you back," John declared. "And you must not do what you suggest. That would be terrible! There is another way out of the difficulty, and you know what that is."

"Yes, I know, John. The captain spoke of it yesterday."

"He did! Good for him. He is a man of sense, all right. And won't you, Jess? We can get married, and then no one can take you from me."

Jess remained silent for a few minutes, with her face turned to the river, shimmering in the glow of eventide.

"We must wait, John," she at length replied. "We are both young yet, so there need be no hurry. Should we get married now, I know that my father would make every effort to separate us, even though I have the right to do as I please. He is a very determined man, and when he once makes up his mind it is almost impossible to stop him. When he finds out what I have done his anger will be great. But what would it be like should I marry you? No, we must wait. I shall go away and hide myself."

"You cannot do that, Jess. I am afraid you know very little about the world. Why, what could you do to make a living? You have been well educated, but what could you do to earn enough to live upon? You have always had plenty of money for all your needs; you have led a sheltered life, so you cannot understand the struggle it would mean to go out into the world to battle your own way. Now, is there one thing you could really do to earn a living?"

"I don't know, John," was the low reply. There were tears in the girl's eyes, for she realised that the words of advice were only too true. "I am afraid you are right. I did not look at it that way."

"I know you didn't, so that is why I have spoken so

plainly. It would be cruel not to open your eyes and show you the difficulties ahead."

"What am I to do, then?" the girl asked in a despairing voice. "We must not marry each other now. But what can I do? Where can I go?"

For a few minutes silence reigned, as the two stood there. John was thinking rapidly, and at last he turned to the girl with the light of a new idea shining in his eyes.

"I know what we can do," he told her. "We can hide you where your father cannot find you for some time. There is a place out in the hills where you can stay, and no one will have any idea where you are. Mother can go with you, and it will do her so much good, for she needs to get away for a change. We have a nice cabin there, which father built. It is on a little island in a beautiful lake, and I know you will enjoy the life. You see, we have a coal mine on the shore of the lake, and that is why father built the cabin. He used to live there for weeks at a time. But since his death it has been occupied but little, although I sometimes spend several days there when out hunting."

The expression in the girl's eyes showed her interest in John's words, and when he stopped she lifted her face to his.

"But what about you?" she asked. "How will you get along without your mother?"

"Oh, I shall live there, too, part of the time," John laughingly explained. "You will not get clear of me as easily as all that. I shall have to attend to the farm, but having the car, I can run out and back in a short time. Perhaps you will see too much of me when you and mother set up housekeeping in the wilderness."

"I think it will be splendid!" Jess exclaimed. "I have often wanted to live just such a life as you de-

scribe. And having your mother with me, and you visiting us often, what more could one ask?"

"And just think of the delightful hours you and mother can spend upon the lake, or walking through the woods. And during the evenings and on wet days you will have books and magazines, for I shall keep you well supplied with reading matter. In fact, there are a good many books already in the cabin, for father was a great reader."

"When can we go, John?" Jess was all eager now for the adventure.

"We shall have to speak to mother first. I know that she will enter enthusiastically into our scheme."

"Then we had better go back to the house at once. We told her we would be away but a short time, and we have forgotten all about our promise."

"Mother won't mind," John replied. "She likes to see us happy, and she understands."

They stepped out from beneath the tree upon the narrow path, and as they did so a sound upon the river attracted their attention. Glancing in that direction, they saw a small row-boat coming toward them. There was one person on board, pulling at the oars with long, steady strokes.

"Why, it is Eben!" John exclaimed. "And there's the 'Eb and Flo' lying at anchor. It's a wonder we didn't hear some sound before."

"Suppose we wait here until Eben comes ashore," Jess suggested. "It will give him a great surprise. I have not seen him since the truck ran off the track at the quarry."

It took Eben but a few minutes to reach the land and pull up the boat. He then straightened himself up, and was about to move up the path when he caught sight of the two standing before him. In a twinkling the ex-

pression upon his face changed, and his eyes glowed with the light of jealousy and hatred.

"Come on up, Eben," Jess invited. "We're waiting for you."

With a bound the youth did as he was bidden, and in another minute he was standing before the two, with his fists doubled, and a defiant look upon his face.

"Why, Eben, what's the matter?" Jess asked, shrinking back in fear.

The boy, however, was not looking at her, but at John.

"I hate you!" he cried. "I will kill you!"

"What do you mean?" John sternly asked. "What have I done to you?"

"You stole her from me," and Eben motioned to the girl.

"Oh, I see," and John laughed. "Come, Jess, we had better go home. Eben is jealous, and I don't want to fight a duel here."

Like a flash the maddened youth stooped, seized a stick lying near, and hurled a savage blow at John's head. Quick as lightning the latter dodged, and although he managed to escape the full force of the blow, one end of the stick grazed his forehead, inflicting a long gash. It staggered him for an instant, but recovering, he leaped toward his assailant. With a gurgling cry of baffled defeat, Eben turned and fled down the path, along the shore, and disappeared amid the trees.

Blood was now flowing from the wound in John's forehead as he stood and stared in the direction Eben had gone. Then he turned to his companion.

"This explains something which has been puzzling me," he began. "I know now who threw the stone which hit you on the head. It was intended for me, but it struck you instead."

"Oh, do you think so?" the girl asked. "I am greatly

surprised at Eben. I had no idea he would do such a thing."

"H'm, one need never be surprised at anything he does. He's always been a mystery to me, and to everybody else, I guess."

Drawing forth his handkerchief, he wiped the blood from his forehead. This action aroused Jess.

"Forgive me," she pleaded, "I should have been caring for you instead of standing here doing nothing. Come down to the river, and let me bathe your wound. Does it pain you much?"

"Just a scratch," John replied, as he walked along by her side. "It might have finished me, though. It was meant for a knock-out blow. I shall have to settle with that young fool. He must be taught a lesson."

"Oh, don't do anything to him," Jess begged. "He will get over his anger in time. Isn't it strange that he should be so jealous?"

"I don't blame him. If I were in his place I would feel just the same."

The girl understood his meaning, and for an instant a smile dispelled the serious expression upon her face.

"But you wouldn't try to kill a man, would you?" she asked. "You have more sense."

"It is hard to tell what I might do if anyone tried to take you from me."

John was kneeling close to the water now, and the girl was bathing his wound. How delightful it was to feel her gentle touch, and to know that she was so near! It was worth while being injured to have such attention from the one he loved.

For a few minutes Jess held the handkerchief to his forehead. But the blood still flowed, so they decided to go back to the house as quickly as possible, and have it properly dressed.

"Mother is a fine hand at doing up wounds," John explained. "She is as good as any doctor or nurse."

They walked as fast as possible up the path, and when they at length left this to cross the field, Mrs. Tobin suddenly appeared at the front door of her house.

"Have you seen Eben?" she called.

John stopped short in his tracks, and for an instant he was tempted to tell this woman about her son's cowardly attack. He resisted the longing, however, and merely informed her that Eben was down on the shore, and no doubt would be home shortly.

"It is just as well for her not to know what that boy has done," he confided to Jess, as they continued on their way. "It wouldn't do any good, and the less said about it the better."

"And don't let us say anything about what happened at the quarry, John. I feel certain now that Eben threw the stone which hit me."

"There is no doubt about it," was the emphatic reply. "I won't say a word now, but that young rascal must be taught a lesson. He needs to be severely punished for what he has done."

CHAPTER XXII

ON THE REBEL TRAIL

"A STICK struck me, mother. But it's nothing serious; merely a scratch."

Such was John's brief explanation as he entered the dining-room. Mrs. Hampton asked no questions, but seeing how pale Jess looked, she felt certain that something out of the ordinary had happened. It did not take her long to dress the wound, after which the young couple sat down to their supper.

"You will take Mrs. Grimsby home, will you not, John?" Mrs. Hampton asked.

"Certainly," was the reply. "You don't mind waiting a while, do you?" he asked, turning toward the visitor. "I have some chores to do, and then we will all go for a spin. You will come along too, mother, won't you?"

"Not this evening, John. I have some work to do. You and Jess go."

"I don't want you to go to any trouble for me," Mrs. Grimsby remarked. "But I feel that I must get on my way as soon as possible. Gabe may be home at any minute, and he will be very angry if I am not there when he comes."

"Don't you worry about Gabe," John assured her. "I shall settle with him if he makes a fuss when I am there."

"Oh, but he will wait until you get away, and then he'll begin. He's a terrible man when he's angry, and he is angry most of the time when he's home. Be careful about marrying, Miss," and she turned to Jess. "If you

make a mistake and get the wrong man, you might as well put an end to your life at once. It will be better than slow torture through the years. I don't blame that poor girl who drowned herself rather than marry the man she didn't love. You have heard about it, I suppose. And they haven't found her body yet."

Jess tried not to show any sign of agitation at these words, but her hands trembled slightly. John noted this, so, pushing back his chair, he rose from the table.

"You must not judge all men by your husband, Mrs. Grimsby. Gabe is in a class by himself, and I am sorry for you. Just make yourself as comfortable as you can here, and I shall hurry up with my work and get you home as soon as possible."

In about an hour John was ready, and Mrs. Hampton stood at the gate watching the car as it sped down the road. She was really glad to be alone, for the events of the afternoon had been of a disturbing nature. She thought of Hettie and her trials. How astonished the poor woman would have been had she known the truth about Jess! She went back again in memory to that night at the hospital almost twenty years ago. Hettie was a buxom girl then, full of life and animation, not much like the thin dragged-out creature of to-day. Twenty years! And the two babies, innocent pawns in the unscrupulous bargain, had again drifted together as ardent lovers. What would they think if they knew the truth? In what light would they consider the woman who had taken part in the transaction? Her mind was in a tumult. She felt that it would be fatal to tell them. And yet she did want to claim the girl as her very own, that she might know a real mother's love.

Going back into the house, she took from a drawer the roll of bills Mrs. Grimsby had given her. She held it in her hand for a few minutes. It was a part of the money she had paid for silence, and now it had come back.

Hettie's honesty and nobleness of soul touched her deeply. With the crying needs of a large family how many a woman would have kept and used the money? What a temptation! Mechanically she counted the bills—seventy-five dollars. Gabe Grimsby must have been very drunk when he overlooked such a sum. How great would be his anger when he found that the money was not in the house upon his return from the city.

Replacing the roll in the drawer, Mrs. Hampton attended to some household duties. Then she went out upon the verandah to await the young people's return. She was glad to lean back in the chair and rest, for she was tired. The sun had gone down beyond the distant hills, and the long twilight was slowly waning. It was a beautiful evening, and the gentle breeze of the afternoon had sunk to rest with the sun. The smooth surface of the river caught and reflected the glory of departing day, while the trees along the shore stood clearly silhouetted against the silent river. There was peace upon water and land, broken only by the sweet song of a vesper sparrow, and the tingling of a bell from a distant pasture.

But to the woman sitting alone upon the verandah there was no peace. Her heart and mind were in a tumult of conflicting emotion. She was thinking of the girl who had come so unexpectedly into her life and home. The silence and restraint of long years had at last reached their climax. A mother's passionate love possessed her soul, and an intense affection for the child of her womb swept like an overmastering current through her very being. The girl was hers, she must keep her, and she was determined that no power on earth should take her from her.

She was suddenly aroused from her reverie by the sound of an auto upon the road. It drew up and stopped right in front of the gate. A man at once alighted and walked rapidly toward the house. Mrs. Hampton rose

and met him just as he stepped upon the verandah. The visitor was a middle-aged man, of overbearing manner. He had not the courtesy to remove his hat in the presence of the woman, nor to take the big cigar he was smoking from his mouth. In an instant the thought flashed into Mrs. Hampton's mind that this was the man who had come to take away her daughter. She had been dreading his appearance, and now he was before her.

"I am Henry Randall," the man announced, "and I am looking for my daughter. Is she here?"

"Your daughter!" Mrs. Hampton replied. "Why are you searching for her here? Did she not drown herself?"

A heartless laugh broke from the man's lips, as he took the cigar from his mouth, and flicked off the ashes. He looked piercingly at the woman as if expecting to see her quail. But Mrs. Hampton's eyes never flinched for an instant. She was angry at the man's manner of approach, and when a quiet woman is aroused there is need for caution.

"Why don't you answer my question?" the man asked. "I want to know if my daughter is here? She didn't drown herself, though she deserves to be drowned for the way she has acted."

"No, your daughter is not here," Mrs. Hampton quietly replied.

"Not here!" Randall plainly showed his surprise. "Why, I was told that she came to your house."

"Then you were wrongly informed. Your daughter has never been inside my house."

"And you have not seen her?"

"No, I have never met her. You will have to search elsewhere."

"That is strange, madame, very strange. Didn't your son bring a girl here who was injured at the stone quarry?"

"That is quite true, sir. My daughter received a slight

injury at the quarry, and it was she my son brought home."

The man frowned and bit savagely at his cigar.

"Confound it all!" he growled. "What am I to do?"

"Why not go to the quarry," Mrs. Hampton suggested. "You may learn something there."

"That is the only thing I can do, I suppose," and the man sighed. "But, by the way, where is your son now? And your daughter, too, for that matter?"

"They went down the road but a short time ago. Didn't you meet them? They were in a car."

"We met several cars, but I didn't see anything of your son. I know him quite well, for let me tell you, madame, he and my daughter are very fond of each other. I believe that he is the cause of all this trouble."

"I am surprised to hear you say such a thing, sir. Are you sure that my son lured your daughter away from home?"

"I am certain of it, and what is more, I intend to push this matter to the extreme limit of the law. I must see your son. When do you expect him back?"

"Sometime this evening. But when John and Betty go off in the car it is hard to tell when they will return. You will have time to go to the quarry. Most likely they will be home when you get back."

Mrs. Hampton tried to conceal her agitation as she waited to learn how the man would treat her suggestion. It was her only hope, and she watched him closely. She felt like a drowning person grasping at a straw. If she could get this man away, and if John and Jess would soon return, something yet might be accomplished.

"Well, I suppose I might as well go on to the quarry," Randall growled as he pulled out his watch. "I expected that my journey would end here, and by this time I would have that foolish girl safe under my care. I do not know what is coming over young people these days."

In another minute he was gone, and when the car had disappeared in a whirl of dust, Mrs. Hampton sank down upon the top step of the verandah and buried her face in her hands. She was trembling violently, and felt very weak. The ordeal through which she had just passed had unnerved her. What was she to do? she asked herself. How was she to save her child? She lifted her head and listened intently, hoping to hear the purr of John's car. But no sound greeted her attentive ears, listen as she might.

Presently she aroused herself and rose quickly to her feet. An idea had come into her mind which stirred her to activity. Going at once into the house, she set busily to work both upstairs and down, and in less than a half hour she had several rolls of blankets and quilts lying on the hall floor, and two baskets filled with dishes and provisions. She was standing wondering what else she needed, when she heard John's quick step upon the verandah.

"Mother," he began, catching sight of her. Then he paused in amazement when he saw the bundles and baskets lying upon the floor. "What in the world are you going to do with these?" he asked. "Is anything the matter?"

In as few words as possible Mrs. Hampton explained the situation, and the urgency of speedy flight. "We must go to the lake, John, and hide Jess there. You don't want Mr. Randall to take her away, do you?"

"Indeed I don't," was the emphatic reply. "Oh, mother, it is good of you to do all this, and help us to keep Jess. We can go at once before Randall comes back."

Picking up the two bundles, he hurried out of the house, and was back again in a few minutes for the baskets.

"You lock up, mother," he said. "I will turn the car. We can explain everything to Jess on the way."

As they sped down the road, Mrs. Hampton explained the reason for their hurried flight. The girl was greatly pleased, and delighted at the idea of hiding in the wilderness.

"It is so good of you to help me in my trouble," she replied. "My father is a determined man, if he once gets his hands on me I shall be helpless. But suppose he finds out where I am?"

"It is hardly likely. But if he does you can leave everything to me."

For some distance they followed the main highway, and at length turned off upon a road leading back into the hills. This was little used, so John had to exercise the greatest care in handling the car. It was hard enough in day-time, but at night it was extremely difficult. He had to drive very slowly, and at times branches of trees scraped the sides of the car.

"This was once called 'The Rebel Trail,'" he explained to Jess after they had climbed a steeper hill than any they had yet encountered.

"What a funny name!" the girl replied. "How did it get such a name as that?"

"It was used very often by the Loyalists in the early days as they travelled overland to the river from a settlement beyond the hills. The Loyalists, you know, were called rebels by the people in the country from which they fled. When those who had settled back in the hills visited the ones along the river, they were often jokingly greeted by the words 'Oh, you rebels!' and in that way the path through the woods got its name. Of course, that was long ago, and few people know about it now. An old man once told me about it, and it always stuck in my mind."

"I guess the name is very suitable," and Jess sighed.

"Another rebel is travelling over it now, for I am sure that is what my parents and others think I am."

"A rebel in a worthy cause, dear," Mrs. Hampton comforted. "It matters very little what people call you when you feel that you have done right."

"And wouldn't you do the same if you were in my place?" Jess asked. "Wouldn't you rebel against marrying a man you despised and hated?"

"I certainly should. I would do almost anything rather than marry the man I disliked."

Further conversation was interrupted by the sudden stopping of the car. John opened the door and stepped out.

"We are here at last," he explained. "This is where we take the boat. I shall leave the car here."

It took them but a few minutes to carry their luggage to the lake and place it on board a small flat-bottomed boat lying upon the shore. With the women seated astern, John took the oars, and soon they were out upon the water.

"This is a wonderful adventure," Jess remarked after they had gone a short distance. "How still and mysterious everything is! I was never in such a place before."

"I hope you will not get homesick here," Mrs. Hampton replied, at the same time taking the girl's right hand in hers.

"Not with you near me, Mrs. Hampton. What lovely times we shall have!"

"I hope so, dear," and the elder woman sighed. "But here we are at the island. You see, it is not far across."

The house on Island Lake was built mostly of logs, and was a cosy abode. It was comfortably furnished, and a rough fireplace was situated at one end of the living room. Jess was overjoyed as she looked around after the lamp had been lighted.

"What a delightful place!" she exclaimed. "I never expected to find such a house as this so far in the wilderness."

"My dear husband and I used to spend very happy days here," Mrs. Hampton told her. "I used to keep house while he worked at the mine. We made very little money, but we were happy, and after all, that is worth more than gold. When he died, I did not have the heart to disturb anything, but left the house just as it was. John has looked after it, and if he had his way he would spend most of his time here."

"And so should I," the girl enthusiastically replied. "I know I shall be happy here. Oh, I am so glad we have come."

John was happy, too, and as he looked upon the bright, animated face before him, he longed to live there in the woods the rest of his life, if only he might have the one who was so dear to him always by his side.

CHAPTER XXIII

STRAIGHT TALK

"I'M sartinly proud of ye, Eben. I didn't think it was in ye."

This was Captain Tobin's comment as he listened for the second time to his son's story of the night on the river, and the rescue from the falls. Supper had been over for some time, but the family lingered at the table, and for once the dishes remained unwashed. Eben was at last a hero in his own home, and his eyes sparkled as he noted how proud the members of his family were of his achievements. This was an unusual experience for him, and his heart glowed with pride. He did not mind telling them what he had done, and how the two men had helped him to hoist the sail.

"Who were they?" his mother asked.

"Oh, just two chaps who happened along in a motor-boat. Guess they were mighty glad to find shelter from the storm."

Eben glanced at his father as he spoke, wondering if he suspected anything. But the captain gave no sign, so the boy was quite relieved.

"And did the people on the wharf cheer when the tug brought you back from the falls?" Flo eagerly asked.

"I guess so, though I can't remember much about it now. It all seems like a dream."

At that instant a loud rap sounded outside. Flo sprang at once to her feet, and when she had opened the door, a man stepped across the threshold.

"Does Captain Tobin live here?" he asked.

"Yes, and he's right in there," Flo replied, motioning to the dining-room which opened off the little hall.

The captain turned to view the visitor, and then attempted to rise. He sank back, however, with a groan, for he had given his foot a slight twist.

"So you are Captain Tobin, eh?" the stranger accosted.

"Yes, all that's left of him," was the reply.

"And you are the owner of the woodboat, the 'Eb and Flo'?"

The visitor's abrupt manner irritated the captain. He knew the man to be Henry Randall, for he had seen him on several occasions. He never liked the man from what he had heard of him, and his repugnance was now steadily increasing.

"You ask me if I own the 'Eb an' Flo,' eh?"

"That's what I said."

"Well, first of all, Mister, I want to know what bizness is it of yours if I do? D'ye want to buy her?"

"I should say not," was the impatient retort. "My name is Henry Randall, and I want to know if my daughter was on board your boat the night she was supposed to have drowned herself off Benton's wharf?"

"No, I didn't see yer daughter," the captain replied. "I never sot eyes on her."

Randall's eyes opened wide in amazement at this unexpected answer. The word "liar" was on his lips, but with an effort he checked himself.

"I am surprised to hear you say that you never saw my daughter," and he looked sternly at the captain. "I have almost certain proof that she boarded your boat off Benton's wharf, and was concealed in the cabin while men were dragging the river for her body. Can you deny that?"

Exclamations from both Flo and her mother caused

Randall to turn quickly around. Mrs. Tobin had risen to her feet, and her eyes were blazing with indignation. She was about to speak when her husband lifted his hand.

"Keep calm, Martha. Keep calm," he advised. "Let me handle this gent." Then he turned to Randall. "So ye say yer daughter ran away from home, eh?"

"She did, and that's why I'm here."

"What did she run away fer?"

"Because she was wilful, and wanted her own way; that's why."

"H'm," the captain grunted, "so that's how ye look at it?"

"And why shouldn't I? But what has all this to do with the finding of my daughter? I didn't come here to be catechised in this way."

"Well, I didn't tell ye to come, Mister. If ye don't like yer reception, ye kin leave whenever ye want to. No one'll interfere with yer goin', an' the door's right thar."

Henry Randall was unused to such plain speech, and it angered him. So accustomed had he been to having his own way and lording it over others that this was an unusual experience and hard for him to endure. His face darkened and he looked sternly at the captain.

"I am not in the habit of allowing people to speak to me in such a manner," he declared. "I can make you pay dearly for your impudence. Do you know who I am?"

"Sartinly I know, an' that's why I'm talkin' jist as I am. I don't very often git roused up, but when I do it takes more'n you to stop me. An' I am roused at the way ye've treated that gal ye call yer daughter. Ye've been buyin' an sellin' so long that yer heart is nuthin' more'n a bank account. An' ye weren't satisfied with tradin' in lumber, but ye even want to sell yer only daughter. Thar, now, don't git riled. Jist keep cool

fer a few minutes 'til I'm through. If yer tired standin', ye kin set down. Flo, give this feller a chair."

"I don't want a chair," Randall angrily retorted. "I want to get through with my business here. I ask you once more if my daughter sought refuge on board your boat the night she was supposed to have drowned herself off Benton's wharf?"

"Didn't I tell ye that I never sot eyes on her?"

"You lie, Captain Tobin. I have definite proof that a girl was aboard your boat when you reached the stone quarry, and that she was later injured on the head by a stone, and brought by a young man, John Hampton by name, to his home. Can you deny that?"

The excitement of Mrs. Tobin and Flo was now intense. They stared in speechless amazement, first at Randall and then at the captain.

"Why don't ye go an' git her, then, if she's with John Hampton?" the captain asked. "What are ye doin' here if yer so sartin about the matter?"

"I'm here because there's nobody home there. I visited Mrs. Hampton on my way up the road, and she told me that my daughter had never been at her house. She said a girl had been injured at the quarry, but it was her own daughter. She suggested that I go to the quarry and make inquiries, which I did. I learned enough there to satisfy me that Mrs. Hampton lied to me, and that the girl who came up the river with you and who was afterwards hurt is my daughter. And then when I come back, I find the Hampton house closed, and no one at home. That's the situation, and it's enough to drive a man crazy."

"It sartinly is most puzzlin'," the captain agreed. "Strange, Martha, isn't it?" and he turned to his wife. "But, then, perhaps they've all gone fer a car ride. It's a fine night fer a spin."

"But Mrs. Hampton told me that her son would most

likely be home when I came back from the quarry," Randall explained. "It seems to me that I am being deceived and checked on all sides. I wonder what is the reason?"

"The reason, sir, is very clear," Mrs. Tobin replied. "The sympathy of all is with your daughter because of the way you have treated her. I admire her for what she did."

"Madame, madame, I am astonished at you," Randall declared.

"You needn't be astonished at all, sir. I have listened to this conversation, and see things in a new light. I could not understand my husband's actions a few days ago, but now it is nearly all explained. Sam'l," and she turned to her husband, "did you have this man's daughter on board the 'Eb and Flo' the day you sailed by here without stopping?"

"No, Martha, I did not," was the emphatic reply.

Mrs. Tobin looked at the captain for a few seconds in silence. Then she detected a peculiar expression in his eyes, and at once surmised its meaning.

"But, Sam'l, did you have a girl on board?"

"Yes, Martha, I did."

"Then you have been lying."

"No, I haven't. This man asked me if I had his daughter on board, an' I told him I didn't. That gal might have been his daughter once, but she isn't now. Any man who would treat a gal the way this man treated that beautiful creature who tumbled into the cabin of the 'Eb and Flo' has no right to call her his daughter, so thar."

"What fool-talk is this?" Randall impatiently asked. "I know now that it was my daughter you had on board your boat. What you think about my actions doesn't worry me in the least. Your quibbling is childish and unbecoming to a man of your age. You will change your tune, though, let me tell you that, when you are called

upon to face the charge of being involved in my daughter's wild escapade."

"Go ahead, Mister, go ahead. Whenever ye want me, jist sing out."

"Oh, I shall sing out, all right. You needn't think I'm bluffing. When I undertake a thing I carry it through."

"An' I s'pose ye'll carry through the persecution of that gal ye call yer daughter?"

"What do you mean?"

"Ye'll force her to marry that Lord's son, the feller with the wobbly knees an' brainless head?"

"Yes, I am determined that she shall marry Lord Donaster's son. My mind is made up to that, and nothing can change it."

"But ye haven't got yer daughter yit."

"Oh, that's merely a matter of time. She may escape me for a while, but I shall get her sooner or later."

"But s'pose somebody else gits her first?"

"You mean young Hampton?" Randall somewhat anxiously asked.

"I sartinly do. He's hot on her trail, an' it looks to me as if they're mighty fond of each other. Mebbe they're off now to be hitched up. Ye kin never tell what notions young people'll take."

"Then I'll tear them apart," Randall angrily declared. "My daughter shall never remain the wife of an ignorant country clown. But I don't believe she would go that far. No doubt she is hiding somewhere. Have you any idea where that might be?"

"I don't believe she's on board the 'Eb an' Flo' this time. Ye'll have to hunt elsewhere."

"And I shall. I've lost too much time already, and I should be in the city by now. I have an important business engagement there. Confound it all!"

Without another word he turned and strode out of the house, slamming the front door after him. There was

silence in the room for a brief space, broken at last by the captain's chuckle of amusement.

"Ho, ho," he laughed, "that feller got a dose to-night, didn't he? What d'ye say, Martha? Got a big hand-out fer me now?"

"No, Sam'l," was the quiet reply. "I really can't scold you this time. You did what was right in saving that poor girl from such a brutal father. But why didn't you tell me about it?"

The captain shuffled uneasily, although his eyes twinkled.

"I was really afraid to, Martha," he confessed. "But I was wrong. I'll never do sich a thing agin. The next gal who flops herself aboard the 'Eb an' Flo,' I'll bring straight home fer you to look after."

"For pity's sake, Sam'l, I hope you'll never get into such a scrape again. And you are not out of this one yet, from all appearance. Mr. Randall is a hard man to deal with, and I feel sure that he intends to go to law about this affair."

"He kin go to law, or to, or to——" The captain longed to say just where, but he checked himself in time. "If Randall wants a fight, jist let him come along. If he gits me into court I'll tell him a few things I didn't mention to-night."

"But it may take our place, Sam'l," Mrs. Tobin reminded. "Mr. Randall is a rich man and money will do almost anything these days."

"I don't care a hang, Martha, how much money he's got. I've got right on my side, an' I guess that's never fersaken a man yit, not under the Union Jack, at any rate. To save a gal from a brute of a father is worth a great deal to my way of thinkin'. Hey, Eben, don't ye agree with me? You had a hand in this."

The captain turned as he spoke, but his son was not in the room.

"Where in time is that boy?" the captain asked in surprise. "He was here a few minutes ago."

"He followed Mr. Randall out," Flo explained, "and he hasn't come back yet."

"I s'pose he wants to see that the skunk got away without stealin' any chickens. It's jist as well to be on guard when a feller like that's around. Jist hand me my pipe, will ye, Flo? I want a smoke to settle me nerves. They've been upset a bit to-night."

CHAPTER XXIV

EBEN ATTENDS TO GRIMSBY

DURING the conversation Eben had been a silent listener. But his mind was very busy, and he was doing some serious thinking. Randall appealed to him. He knew that he was a prominent business man, and he liked the brusque way he talked. When, however, he learned that the Hamptons had carried off Jess, his heart filled with anger and jealousy. He truly surmised where they had gone, for he knew how fond John was of the cabin in the wilderness, and it would be the most likely place where he would take the girl for safe keeping. He thought of his encounter with the two down on the shore, and his eyes glowed with a fierce light. He was no match for John in an open fight, he was well aware, so he must use other means.

As he listened to Randall, and watched his every movement, the idea flashed into his mind that this was the man to deal with John Hampton. He longed to see the two together, and, unobserved, watch the encounter. What fun it would be, and how great the satisfaction to witness the defeat of his rival! That they would fight if they met, he had not the slightest doubt, for to his mode of thinking that was the only way to settle such a dispute.

When Randall at length left the house, Eben slipped quietly and quickly out after him. He was by the side of the car just as the owner was taking his seat and giving orders to the chauffeur. Randall saw the dim

figure loom up by his side, and demanded who he was and what he wanted.

"It's only me, Eben explained.

"And who's me?" was the curt query.

"Eben, the captain's son."

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want a drive down the road. Will ye take me?"

"No, I can't. I'm in a hurry. Get away from the car. I don't want to be bothered with anyone."

He spoke to the chauffeur, and at once the engine began to hum. But Eben was not to be thus defeated. He jumped upon the running board, and thrust his head into the car, almost into Randall's face.

"Ye'll take me if I tell ye where yer daughter is, won't ye?" he roared.

"Do you know?" Randall shouted.

"Y'bet I do."

"All right, then, get in," and Randall pushed open the door.

In a twinkling Eben was by his side, the door was slammed to, and the car was purring on its way.

"Well, where is my daughter?" Randall asked.

"I believe she's on Island Lake. D'ye know where that is?"

"No, I don't. Where in the devil is it?"

"Back in the hills. The Hamptons have a cabin there on an island. Their coal mine is on the shore on the other side."

"Oh, I know. I've fished in that lake, though I haven't been there for several years. What makes you think my daughter's there, boy?"

"Guess it's about the only place John 'ud take her. He's mighty fond of that cabin, an' would live there all the time if he could. Most likely Mrs. Hampton's gone along, too."

Randall made no reply, but sat lost in thought. Eben

enjoyed the drive. It was no nice to roll smoothly along in the big, luxurious car. He nestled back in the easy seat, and gave himself up to the enjoyment of the moment. Some day he would have a car of his own just like this, with a chauffeur to look after it.

"You must be happy, Mister," he at length remarked.

"Happy!" Randall roused from his reverie with a start, and straightened himself up with a jerk. "What makes you think I'm happy?"

" 'Cause you've plenty of money, an' own a car like this."

Randall laughed outright, although there was no mirth in his laughter.

"And so you think money makes a man happy, eh?"

"It should. Why, ye kin buy what ye like."

"Look here, boy," and Randall's voice became more gentle than Eben had ever heard it. "Money won't buy happiness. It will provide one with many things, I acknowledge. But it won't buy the great things of life, and that is where it fails a man in his time of need. Do you think I am happy?"

"No, I guess yer not, sir, from what I've seen of ye."

"You're right, boy, you're right. I'm not happy, and I have money. But, there, why am I talking this way to you?"

"Mebbe, I know," Eben replied. "Yer thinkin' of yer daughter, an' what she's done. Isn't that it?"

"It is. How can a man be happy when his only daughter has run away from home?"

"An' why did she run away, sir?"

"Why? Why?" Randall paused, and stared straight before him.

There was no more time to continue the conversation, for they were now almost at Grimsby's house whither Eben was bound. He asked the driver to pull up and

let him out. The car soon stopped in front of the place, and Eben opened the door and stepped out.

"Thank ye, sir, fer the drive," he said.

"Oh, that's all right," Randall replied. "And you feel quite sure that my daughter is on Island Lake?"

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised. Where else would John take her?"

"It is reasonable and worth looking into, anyway. And say, there's a boat out there, isn't there?"

"Yes, John has a good one."

"But suppose it's on the island if I should want it?"

"Oh, jist holler, an' if he doesn't know who ye are, he'll row over fer you. But most likely John will come back in the mornin', so he'll have to bring the boat over. Ye see, he'll have to go home to look after the stock. If ye happen to be around the lake when he's home, most likely ye'll be able to git the boat."

"A good idea," Randall replied. He then spoke to the chauffeur, and in another instant the car was away.

Eben stood for a few minutes staring through the darkness down the road.

"I wonder if he'll go to Island Lake?" he mused. "If he does, Gabe needn't go, an' so he won't want me. I'd rather be hidin' around in the bushes to see the fun. I'd like to see John an' Randall in a stand-up fight, I surely would. But mebbe it'd be better fer John to go back to the island an' not find his sweetheart. Say, it 'ud be great to watch him ramp an' tear around."

A cry of pain and fright from the house nearby startled him. Wheeling sharply around, he saw that the front door was open and the form of a woman was falling down the rickety steps. Surprised beyond measure, Eben hurried forward until he reached the prostrate woman. She was moaning and sobbing bitterly, and making no effort to rise.

"What's the matter?" Eben asked, bending over her. "Are ye hurt?"

"Yes, yes," the woman wailed. "He hit me, and kicked me out of the house."

"Who did?" Eben straightened himself up, while his hands clenched hard. "Who hit ye?"

"Gabe, of course. But don't go in; he might kill you. He's in a terrible rage."

With a bound Eben was through the door and into the house. The room was a sight to behold. Chairs and tables were upset, broken dishes were lying on the floor, and several frightened, half-dressed children were huddled in one corner. In the middle of the room stood the master of the house, his moon-like face red with anger. He retreated a few steps as Eben appeared.

"Did you do that?" the latter demanded, shaking his right fist menacingly before Grimsby.

"Yes I did," was the surly reply. "And it's none of your d—— business what I do in my own house. Get out of this."

Eben's only reply was to seize Gabe by his coat collar, and yank him suddenly forward. Then he shook him as a dog would shake a rat, while Grimsby filled the house with his howls of distress. He was a veritable coward at heart, and in Eben's hands he was as helpless as a child.

"Ye'll kill me, ye'll kill me!" he wailed. "Fer God's sake, let up."

"I want to kill ye," his captor roared. "Yer not worth livin'. Take that, an' that, an' that."

Eben had lost complete control of himself now. The fury of his passion was let loose, and he shook and thumped his victim unmercifully. Grimsby's fear increased to terror, and he made frantic efforts to free himself. He even fought and bit, but all in vain. Eben held him firm, and at last pinning him with his body

upon the floor he began to deal blow after blow upon the victim's face and head.

There is hardly the shadow of a doubt but that Eben would have killed Gabe there and then, so intense was his rage. But at this critical moment Mrs. Grimsby caught him by the arm and attempted to pull him away from her husband.

"Don't kill him, don't kill him," she pleaded. "Be careful what you are doing."

This appeal brought Eben somewhat to his senses, and his hands relaxed. He hesitated for a few seconds, and then rose slowly to his feet.

"He ought to be killed," he growled. "He's a brute."

"I know, I know," the woman agreed. "But you mustn't do it. It would be murder, and you would be hung."

A grim smile overspread Eben's face, as he stepped back, and folded his arms.

"Well, then, s'pose you kill him," he suggested. "He tried to kill you, so it's better fer you to do it first."

"No, no," the woman protested. "There must be no killing here. Get up, Gabe," she ordered, touching her husband with her foot. "You must be thoroughly ashamed of yourself by this time. Maybe this will knock some sense into your head."

Very reluctantly the defeated man drew himself up to his knees, and then staggered to his feet. His face was swollen where Eben's fists had fallen, and his eyes were wild with fear. He edged away from his antagonist, and kept as close as possible to his wife.

"Don't let him touch me again," he begged. "He's not a human being, but the devil in the form of a man. I never saw anything like him."

"Don't be such a coward," his wife chided. "If you behave yourself he won't hurt you."

"Indeed I won't," Eben agreed. "But look here,

Gabe Grimsby, if ye ever lay hands on yer wife agin, an' I hear of it, I'll come an' tear ye to pieces. D'ye call yerself a man to hit a woman, an' her yer wife?"

"But she provoked me," Gabe defended.

"What did she do?"

"She stole my money; that's what she did."

"You're a liar," his wife charged. "It wasn't your money, anyway. I merely took it back to where it belongs."

"Ye did?" Gabe snarled. "So that's where ye were, eh? Why didn't ye tell me that before?"

"I didn't have to, Gabe Grimsby. If you'd acted like a man when you came home, I might have told you. But, no, when you got here and found that I was away, instead of staying with the children you went off to the store. Then when you did come home and found that supper was not ready because I just got back, you began to act like a demon. If it hadn't been for Eben here, I don't know what would have happened to me."

"An' he hit ye fer that?" Eben asked in surprise.

"Yes, for that, and because of the money."

"What money?"

"Hush-money; that's what it was. He dragged it out of Mrs. Hampton, that's what he did, the villain. She paid him to keep silent."

The light of understanding dawned in Eben's eyes, and he even smiled.

"It had to do with the girl, eh?" he queried. "Mrs. Hampton paid Gabe to say nuthin' about her, I s'pose. She wants to keep her hidden from her dad. I came here in his car, and I tell ye he's mighty mad."

"Has he found her?" Grimsby asked, forgetting in his interest his battered face.

"Naw, he hasn't found her. But he will, though, if you don't git a hustle on. He knows where she is."

"He does! Where?"

"Oh, it's no use tellin' you. What can you do? You'll be in bed to-morrow nursin' yer face."

"No, I won't. Just tell me where that girl is, an' I'll send word to the city this very night."

"Why should I tell ye, Gabe? Ye don't deserve to be told after what ye did to yer wife."

"I swear I'll never do such a thing again, Eben. I lost my head, an' didn't realise what I was doing.

"H'm, I guess ye nearly lost yer head when I got hold of ye. If it hadn't been fer yer wife here I'd had yer head off by this time. But come along outside, an' we'll talk this matter over. Them kids ought to be in bed," and he motioned to the weary children over in the corner. "Good-bye, Mrs. Grimsby; jist send me word if Gabe hits ye agin. I'll fix him fer sure next time. Come along, Gabe, I want to have a talk with ye."

CHAPTER XXV

THE FOREST FIRE

JOHN HAMPTON was somewhat late in leaving the island the next morning. There had been many things to do, and he found the life so pleasant that he preferred to stay all day. But it was necessary for him to get back home to look after the stock, and attend to many other duties around the place.

"Do you think you can manage all right, John?" Mrs. Hampton anxiously asked as she and Jess accompanied him to the boat. "I feel that I should go home too."

"Oh, I shall have no trouble, mother," John assured her. "But I don't like to leave you two here alone. I shall be back, though, as early as I can this evening."

"We shall have a great time together, shan't we?" and Jess turned to Mrs. Hampton as she spoke. "I am looking forward so much to this day in such a beautiful spot as this."

"So you won't miss me at all, I suppose?" John queried as he looked lovingly upon the girl's bright, animated face.

"Indeed we shall," Jess smilingly told him. "But you would not want us to mope around all day, simply because you are not with us, would you? We shall look forward to your return this evening."

"And don't forget the milk," Mrs. Hampton reminded. "We forgot to bring any last night. It was stupid of me. And don't tell anyone where we are. Keep clear of Mrs. Tobin, if you possibly can."

"That's easier said than done," John laughed, as he pushed off the boat and sprang lightly on board. "However, I shall do the best I can."

In a few minutes he was skimming over the water, while he kept his eyes fixed upon the girl standing upon the shore, waving her hand to him until he had landed and disappeared from view. How happy he was that morning, and his heart was very light as he boarded his car and started for the river. He felt sure now of the girl's love, and he begrudged every minute he was away from her. He would hurry through his work and get back to the island as speedily as possible.

He had just reached the gate of his home when he heard someone calling. Looking around, he saw Mrs. Tobin running toward him and waving her arms for him to stop. He smothered an exclamation of annoyance, as he pulled up his car.

"Have you seen anything of Eben?" the woman asked. "He left home last night, and hasn't been back since."

"No, I haven't seen anything of him," John replied. "But don't worry, Eben is well able to look after himself."

"I suppose he is, but we are all anxious about him. I thought maybe you'd seen him. You just came up the road, didn't you? Down to the city, I suppose?"

"No," John curtly replied, as he started the car and drove on, leaving Mrs. Tobin standing gazing after him.

"She didn't get anything out of me this time," John muttered. "She'll be more curious now than ever to know where mother and Jess are."

For a couple of hours John worked hard around the place. He then went into the house for a lunch, which he ate in the kitchen. His thoughts, however, were back in the hills, to the little cabin in the woods. He pictured to himself the whole scene, and he longed to be there.

At times during the morning he had paused at his

work and looked toward the lake. Although he could not see the girl of his heart's desire, it gave him some comfort to turn in her direction and gaze upon the hills which surrounded her. He did this again when he came out of the house after his hasty meal. But no sooner had he looked, than he uttered an exclamation of dismay. The woods in the distance were on fire! Great clouds of smoke were rolling across the land, and at times blotting the hills entirely from view. The fire was off to the right, and perhaps a mile or more away. But he well knew that between it and Island Lake was a large stretch of blueberry plains. When the fire reached this, it would travel rapidly, devouring everything in its way. Then it would sweep through a thicket of fir and spruce trees on the shore of the lake, and the flames would be sure to leap to the island, which here was but a short distance across. And Jess and his mother were there! They could not escape, for they had no boat. And if they did, where could they go for safety? The fire would reach them no matter where they went, for from all appearance it was making a wide sweep in its onward rush.

"Confound Sam Lemon for starting that fire!" he growled. "I feel sure he did it, for he told me the other day that he was going to burn that fallow of his. I warned him to be careful, but he only laughed. I wish I had hold of him now, the scamp!"

John, however, knew that such lamentations would be of no use. Something must be done and at once if the women on the island were to be rescued. Just what he could do he was not sure. Anyway, if he were with them something might be done. He could not leave them there without an effort to save them. He was greatly excited now, so hurrying to his car, he sprang on board and started down the road. He drove faster than usual, and in a short time reached the Rebel Trail, by which

he had come that very morning. Under ordinary circumstances he would have driven slowly and carefully over the rough way, for there were gullies formed by the rain, and rocks around which it was necessary to steer most cautiously. But John was so anxious and excited that he threw caution to the wind and sent forward the car at a break-neck speed. For a time all went well until he reached a small bridge, formed of poles, which had become very rotten. The inevitable happened, for no sooner had the car touched the bridge than the right wheel crashed through, and in an instant the car was tightly jammed, the sudden impact hurling John against the wind-shield, which broke beneath his weight.

Recovering himself as quickly as possible, he examined the car, and found the wheel so firmly wedged among a mass of rotten sticks, earth, and rocks that it could not be removed without assistance. And, anyway, he did not have time, for every minute was precious with the fire sweeping steadily onward. The only thing now left was to walk the rest of the way. By the road this would mean over two miles, but across country, through the woods, and along the edge of the blueberry plains it was about one mile shorter. He knew this route well, as he had travelled it often before he bought the car. He did not relish the idea of the walk on such a hot day, especially as he would be forced to hurry as fast as possible if he would win out against the fire.

Leaving the road, he plunged into a growth of young fir trees, made his way through these, and at length reached a valley where the trees were larger, and the underbrush was not so thick. This would lead him to the level beyond where he could obtain a view of the fire, and learn the real nature of the danger. The heat here was intense, for not a breath of wind fanned his hot forehead. But steadily and rapidly he sped forward, and to his great relief reached, at length, the edge of the

woods. Here he stopped and viewed the situation. Below him on his right was a stretch of country, covered with blueberry bushes, small fir, pine and spruce trees. It was a desolate region, and the hot sun had parched the shallow soil which covered the rocks beneath. In places these rocks protruded above the ground, and presented either flat surfaces or large cairn-like heaps.

The instant John emerged from the forest he looked anxiously away to the right, and the sight he beheld filled him with fear and awe. The forest was a seething mass of flames, and great volumes of smoke were rolling up into the air. The roar of the fire, and the crashing of trees could be heard for some distance, growing louder each minute. The monster was speedily approaching, laying waste all before it. In another half hour or so it would be through the heavy timber and out upon the plains where everything would be quickly blasted beneath its fiery breath. Even now the wind, caused by the fire, was sending forth flaming branches, and wherever these fell they began to burn most fiercely.

John realized that the sooner he was out of this place the better, for at any minute he might become encircled by a roaring furnace. He was most thankful that the fire had not reached the lake, so he would be in time to assist the ones on the island in case of need. The only danger would be from flying embers, but if there, he might be able to stamp out any flame before it had time to do much damage.

As he hurried along the edge of the plains the roar of the fire became almost deafening, while the incessant crashing of trees added to the horror. Never before had he experienced such a forest fire, although he had heard old men tell with almost bated breath of the wild fires they had witnessed, and of the destruction which had ensued.

He had gone about half way to the lake, when, hap-

pening to glance to his right, he saw something slowly moving among the bushes some distance away. As he looked, he noticed that it was a man, who seemed to be limping painfully among the bushes. At times he stopped, glanced back, and then staggered forward. Who could it be? he wondered, and what was he doing over there? That the man needed assistance was certain, for at the rate he was travelling he would surely be overtaken by the fire ere he could reach the lake. John was greatly puzzled. What should he do? He must reach the island in time to save the women, and yet it was not right to leave the apparently helpless man on the plains to die.

As he stood there uncertain what to do, the creeping figure among the bushes suddenly stumbled, and with a wild cry of despair fell headlong upon the ground. No longer did John hesitate. He sprang forward, plunged through the bushes, leaped over jagged rocks, and in a few minutes was by the side of the prostrate man.

"Hello! What's wrong?" he asked. "Can I do anything for you?"

Hearing the sound of a human voice, the fallen man moved, lifted his head, and looked around. As he did so, John gave a great start and uttered an exclamation of astonishment. It was Henry Randall!

CHAPTER XXVI

IN THE RING OF DEATH

AT first Randall did not recognise the young man who had so suddenly appeared before him. He stared as if he beheld a vision, and his lips moved, although he uttered no sound. His face was drawn and haggard, his eyes wild and blood-shot. He was a far different man from the bustling and imperious lumber merchant of the morning.

"What's wrong?" John asked. "Can I help you?"

"What's wrong?" the man repeated. "Everything's wrong. My daughter's gone to the devil, my foot's sprained, and the fire is almost upon me."

"Well, let me help you, then," John replied. "Come, get up, and lean on me. We must get to the lake at once."

Randall made a feeble effort to obey, but sank back upon the ground with a cry.

"I can't walk a step," he groaned. "Leave me here and save yourself. There's no time to lose. O Lord, this is awful!"

"No, I won't leave you here," John declared. "Try to bear the pain for a while. It will be better than to be burned alive. Hurry up. We must get to the lake to save your daughter. She's on the island, and the fire will be there in a short time."

"How do you know my daughter's on the island?" Randall asked. Then the expression upon his face suddenly changed, and a new energy possessed him. He

struggled to his knees and faced the young man. "Are you John Hampton?" he demanded. "Are you the man who lured my daughter away from home?"

"I am John Hampton," was the quiet reply. "But I didn't lure your daughter away from home. She left of her own free will."

"You lie," Randall shouted. "You cursed villain, I'll make you pay for your deviltry. You brought all this trouble upon me, and I'll, I'll——"

"There, now, don't get so excited, sir," John warned. "You need all your strength, so if you don't make an effort to save yourself, you won't have a chance to do anything to me."

"Get out of my sight," Randall shouted. "I won't be saved by a thing like you. I'd rather die first."

To try to reason with this angry and half distracted man John realised would be useless. And besides, there was not time. The roar of the fire was becoming louder, and the flames were about to burst through the forest. Already to their left and right vast columns of smoke were pouring above the tree tops, and fiery tongues were licking among the bushes along the borders of the plains. The situation was desperate. He looked, and his eyes rested upon a pile of large boulders several yards away. These were heaped upon a great flat portion of rock, whose surface was devoid of the least vestige of vegetation. To get the injured man there was his only hope. But when he offered the suggestion, Randall refused it with scorn.

"That place is worse than this," he declared. "Here it will be over in a few minutes, but there I shall slowly roast to death."

"No, you won't," John replied, at the same time laying his hand upon Randall's shoulder. "Come, trust me."

"Leave me alone," was the angry retort. "I'd sooner trust a snake than you. Get out of my sight."

John now knew that he had to take stern measures and act at once, for there was not a minute to lose. Stooping, he caught the helpless man in a firm grip, lifted him from the ground, and staggered through the bushes. Randall was an unwieldy weight, and he struggled and cursed like a madman. At times John thought he would be forced to drop his burden and give up the attempt. But the menacing danger nerved him to almost superhuman effort, and at last he stumbled with his load upon the rocky surface. Dragging Randall to the centre of the stone, he left him sprawling there, and sprang at once to the nearest clump of bushes. Drawing forth a match from his vest pocket, he struck it and touched it to a dry bit of fine grass. A small flame immediately shot up, which soon spread, and raced out among the bushes. The same was done in several other places, and in a few minutes the two men were in the centre of a ring of fire, which enlarged and increased in fury as the flames seized upon the dry material on all sides. The heat now was intense, and the smoke was blinding and suffocating.

During the whole of this performance Randall was yelling frantically to Hampton, asking what he meant by bringing the fire nearer. John, however, made no reply until his work was done. Then he staggered to the excited man's side, and without a word lifted him again in his arms, carried him to the pile of boulders, and laid him down between two big rocks nearest to the lake. Taking off his own coat, he spread it over Randall's head, and part of his body, commanding him at the same time to keep still, and stop struggling. This warning was given none too soon for the next instant a terrific roar rent the air, as the fire burst from the forest and flung itself upon the plains. Nothing could John now see, for the smoke was thicker than ever. The heat, too, was becoming more intense, and for relief he dropped upon his knees and covered his head with a portion of

the coat which he had placed over Randall. This was only a brief respite, however, for burning brands were now falling everywhere, and one lighted almost on top of them. Then others followed in quick succession, so he was forced to stand on guard above the injured man. Desperately he fought the shower of flaming death, hurling aside each ember ere it could alight upon Randall's body. The heat now was almost unbearable. His hands and face were scorched, and his hair singed. How much longer could he fight the demon? he wondered. Would its hot breath lessen, or would it increase and devour him? The roar of the fire was appalling. On all sides it was raging and so dense was the smoke, and so overcome was he with his strenuous exertions, that he felt his strength rapidly weakening. Again and again he nerved himself to the contest, and flung aside the falling embers with the desperation of despair. At last, after an almost superhuman effort, he flung out his hand to ward off another burning missive, when all power deserted him, and with a cry he fell forward full upon a large bolder.

He was aroused by a drop of moisture upon his cheek. Then another, and still another, and he knew that the blessed rain had come to his relief. Oh, how good it was to lie there, and feel the refreshing shower upon his hot face and hands. He knew, too, that the rain would quench the fire for a time, at least, and make it possible for him to escape. He must reach the island to find out about his mother and Jess, and how they had fared. The rain by now had developed into a regular downpour, and the raging fire had been quenched as if by magic. The dense volumes of smoke no longer rolled over the land, and as John looked out upon the blackened plains a scene of desolation met his eyes. The forest on every side was in ruins, even to the lake, a glimpse of which he could see through the stark flame-swept trees. But

how far beyond had the fire extended? That was the question which filled him with anxiety. Had it reached the island, which here was but a few yards from the mainland, or had it been checked by the lake and the rain? This he must find out, and at once.

With difficulty he rose to his feet, for he was bruised and sore, and stepped over to where Randall was lying. Pulling away the coat, he laid his hand upon the man's shoulder, shook him, and told him to get up, as the danger was over. A peculiar muttering sound was the only response, and as John dragged back the prostrate body from between the boulders and looked upon the man's face, he was astonished to see the strange vacant expression in his eyes. Then his lips began to move, and he stared fearfully around.

"Don't let it get me!" he cried. "For God's sake, keep it away! Look, look, it's coming!"

"Come, come, sir, you're all right," Hampton soothed, certain now that the man's mind was somewhat unbalanced by the fearful ordeal through which he had recently passed. "It is raining hard now; don't you feel it? The fire is all out, so you have nothing more to fear."

But Randall clutched him frantically by the arm, and pointed across the plains. "See, see; there it is!" he cried. "It's coming this way! It will burn me alive! Oh, save me! Save me!"

John now realised the helplessness of the situation. It was necessary for him to hurry to the island, and yet he could not leave this demented man alone on the plains. The more he talked and reasoned, the more violent Randall became, begging most piteously to be saved. It seemed strange to John that this helpless being lying there could ever have been the Harry Randall of whom he had heard so much, and who but a short time before

had cursed him so bitterly. Of what avail now were his power, wealth and wrath?

As John stood and wondered what to do, feeling keenly his own impotence, a shout to the right startled him, causing him to turn quickly in that direction. And as he did so, he saw several men hurrying toward him. As they drew nearer, he recognised them as neighbours, men he had known all his life.

"For heaven's sake!" the first man exclaimed, as he reached the spot. He ceased, and his eyes grew big with astonishment as he glanced down upon Randall. "Is that him?" he asked.

"You know him, then?" John queried.

"Hen. Randall, ain't it?"

"Yes, all that's left of him. But how did you know he was here, Jim?"

"Oh, a feller came for us in a car. Said his boss was out here somewhere, and he was afraid the fire had overtaken him. Guess Randall must have got lost. But we couldn't do anything when we did come. If it hadn't been for that rain the fire would have done terrible damage."

"It's done a great deal already," and John motioned to Randall, who had ceased his pleadings, and was lying still upon the ground. "He's had a hard time of it. His ankle's sprained or broken, I don't know which, and he's crazy."

The four men of the relief party looked curiously upon Randall, who presented a wretched appearance with his blackened face and rain-soaked clothes.

"D'ye think he'll get over this?" Jim Shaw asked, turning to John.

"Not if he stays here," was the emphatic reply. "You men must take him out of this at once. I've got to go to the island. Mother's there."

"Your mother's on the island!" Jim fairly shouted

the words. "Why, no one could live on the island before that fire. Good Lord, man! She must be burned alive!"

For a few seconds the five men stood and stared at one another. The horror of the situation silenced their tongues. John was the first to speak.

"You look after Randall," he ordered. "I must get to the island and find out the worst. Perhaps the rain checked the fire in time."

He then turned and hurried across the blackened waste. He tried to keep calm, but his heart beat fast, and a great dread possessed him. What if his mother and Jess were both dead! The thought was appalling. It drove him forward like a hound. He leaped over sticks and stones in his headlong speed, dashed through the burned trees, and sprang out upon the shore of the lake. Here he stopped, and as his eyes rested upon the island a cry of despair burst from his lips. The fire had reached the place and swept it from end to end! But what of his mother and Jess? Were they alive? or were their charred bodies now lying exposed to the pelting rain? He called again and again at the top of his voice, but received no reply. The silence was ominous, for from where he was standing anyone, even in the middle of the small island, should be able to hear.

The one thing now for him to do was to cross that narrow strip of water and find out just what had happened. The only way to get there was to swim, for his boat which he had left that morning at the upper end of the lake could not have escaped the devouring flames. He could see that the fire had passed over the very place, close to the water's edge.

Tearing off his shoes and vest, in another minute he was into the lake, and headed for the island. He was a good swimmer and under ordinary circumstances the swim would have been mere child's play. But he was weak after his fearful exertions, and his clothes impeded

his progress. But still he struggled forward, and at length, wearied almost to the point of exhaustion, his feet touched bottom, and he staggered heavily out of the water, and fell upon the shore. Again he called, but received no reply.

After a few minutes' rest, he regained his feet and groped his way along the shore until he reached the spot where he had landed the women the night before. Fearfully he turned his eyes up the path leading to the house, and as he looked, his heart sank within him. Nothing remained of the building but a few black sticks, from which small wreaths of smoke were issuing. He walked slowly up the path like one in a dream, and stopped before the ruins. But no charred bodies did he find.

And as he looked, a new hope seized him. The women must have fled to the water for protection. Perhaps, even now, they were somewhere on the shore, most likely at the farther end of the island.

Encouraged by this thought, he hurried back to the landing, and made his way down along the shore. He kept a sharp outlook, but no sign of life met his view. As he advanced, nothing rewarded his efforts, and despair once more seized him. The women could not have escaped from the island without assistance, he was certain. And it was hardly likely that any rescuer would be on hand in the time of need. Perhaps they had rushed into the water, and driven by the fury of the flames had gone beyond their depth. All this came into his mind as he turned the lower end of the island and viewed the shore to his right. He stopped and cast his eyes toward the mainland, but everywhere was the same scene of black desolation. It was wonderful how fast and far the fire had travelled before being checked by the rain.

Continuing his walk, he moved slowly along the shore until he came abreast the spot where the cabin had stood, and on the opposite side of the island from the landing.

There was no need for him to go any farther. The women were nowhere in the vicinity, he was sure. They must have been drowned!

But perhaps they had been overtaken by the fire in their rush to the water, and their charred bodies even now might be lying among the trees. It was a fearful thought, which paled his burnt cheeks, and caused him to tremble violently. Should he search for them? he asked himself.

"I can't do it!" he groaned. "Oh, God! this is terrible!"

He buried his face in his hands, and sank down upon the ground, his soul writhing with the agony of an overwhelming despair.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN THE NICK OF TIME

"WHAT a lovely place this is!"

Jess was standing close to the water looking across at the opposite shore. Mrs. Hampton, seated upon the bank, thought she had never beheld a more beautiful picture of grace and maidenly charm. Her heart thrilled as she watched her standing there. She was her own child, and no one had any right to take her away. Her face, however, became grave as she thought of Henry Randall. He was a determined man, she was well aware, and he would exert every effort, and spend money without stint to get control of the girl he believed to be his daughter. She felt that affairs were nearing a crisis now. But she would fight, and, if necessary, divulge the story of her own wretched sin. It would be a startling revelation to the two young people, she was certain, but she fondly cherished the hope that they would readily forgive her for her dark deed of the past.

"Do you think John will come back early?" Jess asked, as she came and sat down by Mrs. Hampton's side.

"He will return just as soon as he can, you may depend upon that," Mrs. Hampton smilingly replied. "I hope he won't neglect his work to get here."

"And will he go home every day?"

"He will have to, so long as we remain here."

"Why can't we stay here all the time?" Jess impulsively asked.

"How could we live, dear?" and Mrs. Hampton looked fondly upon the girl's animated face. "You have never worked for a living, so have no idea what it means. If we stay here long without caring for the place, we shall all starve, and that would be worse than going back to your—your parents, would it not?"

"But it is so nice here, and I am very happy" Jess gave a sigh of contentment, and looked out over the water. "I wish we had a boat," she continued, "so we could go for a row. The lake is like a mirror, and how wonderfully the trees are reflected in the clear depths. It is all like pictures I have seen."

This conversation took place as the two remained by the landing after watching John disappear among the trees on the opposite shore. At length they went back to the house, and busied themselves with washing the breakfast dishes, and tidying up the rooms. When this was at last finished, they again went out of doors, and strolled along the shore on the other side of the island. From here Mrs. Hampton pointed out the mine on the mainland, partly concealed among the trees.

"My husband spent much of his time here," she explained, "and hoped that some day the mine would be properly worked. But there doesn't seem to be much chance now of anything being done. The place is becoming overrun with bushes, so John says."

"Is there plenty of coal?" the girl asked, as she looked across the water.

"I understand there is. My husband told me that there is an abundance, and I always had confidence in his judgment. But many people thought he was visionary, and in some unaccountable way they considered his mine a joke."

"What a shame!" Jess declared. "They knew the coal was there, though, didn't they?"

"Oh, yes. But, you see, my husband did not have the capital to develop the mine, and people of means were unwilling to have anything to do with the undertaking, owing to the difficulty of getting the coal to the market. My husband always planned to have a little railway built into the lake. He knew that it could be done, for he had a route surveyed at his own expense. But that took the last cent, so there was nothing left for further development. I really believe the failure of his plans hastened his death."

"And would no one lend him money?" Jess asked. "Why didn't he come to my father? He has plenty of money, and so has mother."

"Your father was appealed to time and time again, but he would do nothing unless my husband sold out his entire right to the mine for a small sum, which, of course, he refused to do."

"And is my father like that in business?" The girl's eyes were wide with surprise.

"We found him so, at any rate. But come, dear, let us not talk any more about this. It is a very painful subject to me, and I did not intend to bother you with my troubles."

They continued their walk along the shore, around the lower end of the island, and up the opposite side.

"I believe we are going to have rain before long," Mrs. Hampton remarked, as she paused and looked at the sky. "I did not notice it before."

"What a black cloud that is over there," Jess replied. "Why, it looks like smoke."

Mrs. Hampton turned, and as she did so, she gave a cry of dismay, and laid her right hand impulsively upon her companion's arm.

"It is smoke! And the wind is blowing it this way!

See how it is rolling toward us. Someone has started a big fire over there, and it may do a great deal of damage, as everything is so dry."

"But we are safe here on this island, are we not?" Jess anxiously asked. "The fire can't surely cross the water."

"It can come through the air, though. Burning brands may soon be falling on all sides, and wherever one alights another fire will be started. We may have a shower of them here, even before the fire reaches the lake."

"What are we to do, then?" the girl asked.

"I do not know except to seek refuge in the lake. The water is deep around the shore of this island, so we could not go out very far."

"Perhaps John will come and take us off," Jess suggested.

"Let us hope so, dear," and Mrs. Hampton placed her right arm lovingly around her daughter. "John will come, if possible, we can be assured of that. No doubt he has seen the fire before this, and is hurrying to our aid now. But, look, isn't the smoke getting thick!"

"And what is that roaring sound?" Jess asked. "It is growing louder."

"It must be the fire; it's getting nearer all the time."

"Oh, what shall we do?" the girl cried, clinging now to Mrs. Hampton.

"We must keep close to the lake, dear, and, if necessary, take to the water. We can wade out as far as we can, and may be able to escape much of the heat of the flames."

Little was said for a while as the two stood there listening to the roaring of the fire, every instant expecting it to leap across the island. Neither did they have to wait long, for soon the air became filled with blazing cinders. They fell with a hissing sound upon the water and along

the shore. In a short time the upper end of the island was on fire, and they could hear the crackle and roar as it rushed through the underbrush, blasting the pine and fir trees in its path.

"It is almost upon us!" Mrs. Hampton cried, clutching Jess fiercely by the arm. "Let us go to the lower end of the island. Perhaps we can get out upon the rocks there. Anywhere is better than here."

Hurrying along the shore as fast as possible, they soon reached the place, and with difficulty made their way over the rough boulders which lifted their heads above the surface of the water. But they could go only a few yards, for when the outer rock was reached, they were forced to stop, as the water was deep beyond. And here they huddled, clinging to each other, every minute expecting the fiery monster to burst forth upon them from the nearby forest.

As they crouched here and waited, they often turned their eyes across the lake to where the boat was lying on the mainland. So thick was the smoke that the opposite shore was greatly dimmed. They wondered what could be keeping John. He was their only hope now, but he must come soon or it would be too late, they felt sure.

It was not long, however, before this avenue of escape was almost cut off. With white faces, and fast-beating hearts they saw the fire sweeping along the shore of the mainland straight for the small boat. Intuitively they both uttered a cry of despair, and stared with wide, straining eyes as the flames rolled onward, every minute drawing nearer to the landing. The fire now raged behind them, as it was raging on the mainland. But still they looked shoreward. Even at the eleventh hour John might arrive. What he would do if he did come they had not reasoned out. Neither did they realise that nowhere on that lake could anything live, ringed in

by such a fiery furnace. They imagined that out upon the water they would find refuge from the flames, so John with the boat was their only means of salvation.

Soon, however, all hope of escape was abandoned. The fire was almost to the landing, and great sheets of flame were leaping high over the very spot where the boat was lying. As yet it was untouched, but in a few minutes it, too, would be swept away.

And as they looked, they beheld the form of a man leaping, so it appeared to them, right out of that wall of fire. Jess started and leaned impetuously forward, and stretched out her arms as if to save him.

"It is John!" she cried. "Oh, he'll be burned! He'll be burned!" She buried her face in her hands to hide the terrible scene from view.

The next instant she lifted her head at Mrs. Hampton's startled exclamation. As she looked, she saw that the man on the shore had reached the boat as the flames were licking around it, and had sent it reeling into the water. Seizing an oar, he drove the craft out into the lake, just as the fire swept over the very spot where a minute before it had been lying. Then he seated himself and began to row straight for the island.

"He doesn't see us!" Jess exclaimed. "He is heading for the landing."

Acting upon the impulse of excitement, she rose to her feet, and balancing herself with difficulty upon the rock, she called aloud three times. As the third call sounded forth, the rower paused, and glanced around to his right. At once the boat swerved to the left until its bow pointed straight for the pile of rocks.

"He sees us! He sees us!" Jess cried. "It must be John, and he will save us!"

While watching the approaching boat, Mrs. Hampton was listening most anxiously to the fire sweeping down upon them from the rear. The air overhead was black

with dense volumes of smoke, and already she could feel the hot breath of the on-coming monster. A more ominous roar than ever caused her to turn partly around. There stood the trees, gaily dressed in their robes of green, unaware that in a few minutes their beauty would be gone, and they would be left mere gaunt and shrivelled spectres. From their low position, and protected by the trees, the vast clouds of smoke did not greatly affect them, but swirled high above. This could not be for long, as already the woman had caught the first glimpse of the fire among the trees. Would the boat reach them in time? That was the question she asked herself, as she looked again in its direction. The rower was straining every effort, and he was now but a few yards away. On and on rushed the boat, and as the rower turned his face toward the women they were startled to see, not the one they had imagined, but Eben Tobin. There was no time, however, for questions now. As the boat neared the rocks, the boy rose to his feet and reached out a fending oar. There was a bump, a grating sound, and a roar from Eben.

"On board, quick," he ordered. "The fire's on top of us!"

Quickly the women obeyed, and scrambled from the rock into the boat, nearly capsizing it as they did so.

"Set there, an' be still," Eben commanded, as he pushed away from the shore, seated himself, and again dipped the oars into the water. He headed the boat around the lower point of the island, and rowed hard. So taken up were the women with watching the fire, that they hardly looked at their rescuer. Had they done so they would have been greatly shocked. The hair had disappeared from his head, his face, arms and hands were red and swollen, while his shirt was entirely charred across his chest and shoulders. His blood-shot eyes, and the haggard expression on his face told their own tale,

although he gave no outward sign of his suffering. He rowed as he had never rowed before, for the lives of the women depended upon his exertions.

Eben had been rowing only a few minutes when the fire reached the lower end of the island. It burst with a mighty roar from among the trees, and hurled its flames out over the rocks where the women had been huddled but a short time before They shivered as they watched the fearful sight, and silently clung to each other. But even now they were not beyond danger. The flames, as if angered by losing their human prey, reached out over the water in a final effort to seize the fleeing ones. Showers of blazing embers were poured forth, and fell around the boat, and at times upon the occupants. The women were now kept alert and busy extinguishing these brands by hurling the largest overboard, and by dashing water with their hands and a small baling can over the others. The heat was intense, and at times almost unbearable. The smoke, too, was blinding and suffocating. This, added to the heat and the roar of the fire, made their position a veritable inferno, from which there seemed no way of escape. So far as they could tell the country all around them was aflame.

Eben uttered no sound, but pulled strongly at the oars. Occasionally he turned his head in an effort to see the mainland toward which he was urging the boat. The fire was sweeping down along the shore, and he could tell by the sound how far it had advanced. In a short time it would be opposite them, and if thus caught between the flames on the shore and those on the island their fate would be sealed.

Almost instinctively now Eben guided the boat, and in a few minutes more it grated upon the beach and brought up with a jerk.

"Get out quick," the lad ordered, as he threw aside the oars and leaped ashore.

Without a word the women immediately obeyed, and no sooner had their feet touched the ground than their rescuer caught each by the arm with a firm grip.

"Come," he gasped. "Guess we're in time."

They hurried up the bank, which here was quite steep, and in another minute Eben halted before an opening in the side of the hill.

"Gee! I struck it right," he panted "It's the mine. Bend yer heads an' come on. I'll show ye the way."

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN URGENT NEED

WHEN Thomas Hampton laboured so hard in opening up his mine on the shore of Island Lake, he little thought in what manner it would one day be used. He had toiled through long weary months, working with pick and shovel, until he had drifted one hundred feet into the side of the hill. He had shored up the roof of the mine with poles he had cut and dragged from the forest, until everything was secure to his entire satisfaction. He had the coal unearthed and ready to be brought forth, but little interest was taken in his efforts, and he had no money to carry on the enterprise.

"We shall come into our own some day," he had told his wife not long before his death. "The mine will be used, and success and fortune will be ours."

Mrs. Hampton thought of these words as she and her companions sat huddled there in the darkness at the farther end of the mine. It had been hard groping their way thither, for the ground was rough, and they had no light to guide their steps. But they were thankful for this refuge, and it was good to sit there and rest.

"Guess the fire can't reach us now," Eben remarked. "Wish to goodness I had a match, so's we could see what kind of a place this is. But I left my vest in the car, and the matches were in the pocket."

"What car?" Mrs. Hampton asked.

"Lord Fiddlesticks'."

"You mean Lord Donaster?"

"I guess that's his name, but dad calls him "Fiddlesticks'."

"And you were with him? Where was he going?"

"Why, he was comin' here, of course. Where'd ye think he was goin'?"

"What was he coming here for?" Jess sharply asked.

"To see you, I guess."

"How did he know where I was?"

"H'm, he found out all right. Ye can't hide from him fer long. He thinks a lot of you, he sure does."

"Where is he now, then?"

"Oh, he skedaddled when he saw the fire. He was 'most scared t' death."

"So he left you alone to save us?" Jess asked. There was a note of tenderness in her voice.

"Oh, I didn't mind. He'd only been in the way. He's no good."

"And you came right through the fire to help us! We would have been burned alive but for you."

"I'm glad I was in time. Oh!" Eben tried to smother the groan, but in vain. The intense excitement on the lake while fleeing from the flames had kept his mind from his burns, but now in the darkness and stillness of the mine it was different. His sufferings increased, and he felt like screaming with the pain. He could sit still no longer.

"You stay here," he ordered, "while I go an' see how things look outside."

"Be careful of yourself, and keep out of the fire," Mrs. Hampton warned.

"Oh, I'll be keerful," Eben faintly replied, as he groped his way along the dark passage. "I won't run no risk."

"Left alone, the women talked about the fire, and the bravery of their young rescuer.

"Eben is certainly a hero," Mrs. Hampton remarked.

"How can we ever repay him for what he has done for us to-day?"

"He must have done it for your sake?" Jess replied. "I am sure he didn't do it for me."

"Why not?" Mrs. Hampton asked in surprise.

"He doesn't like me. I feel certain that it was Eben who threw the stone which hit me that night at the quarry. And then when he came home yesterday and met John and me on the shore he was very angry. He picked up a stick and threw it with all his might. It hit John, but I really believe it was meant for me."

"This is all news to me, dear," Mrs. Hampton replied as she pressed the girl's hand in hers. "What reason has Eben for disliking you?"

"I don't know. But he has acted very strangely ever since those two men were injured at the quarry. He was so pleasant and agreeable before that."

"John met you there that night, did he not?" Mrs. Hampton asked.

"Oh, yes. We were together all the next day, and had such a happy time."

"But what of Eben?"

"I didn't see him at all, and when we went down to the boat in the evening he wasn't there. I asked for him, and one of the workmen said he had run away when he saw us coming. The rest of the men thought it was a big joke and had a great laugh."

Owing to the darkness Jess could not see the smile that flitted across her mother's face. Mrs. Hampton was somewhat amused at the girl's simplicity, although to her the reason for Eben's strange behaviour was quite apparent.

"Eben doesn't dislike you, dear," she told her. "He loves you instead, and loves you so much that he is jealous of John because he thinks he has taken you from him."

"Eben loves me!" Jess exclaimed in surprise. "Why, I never thought of such a thing."

"I know you didn't. But I believe it is true, nevertheless. And I don't blame the boy, for how could anyone help loving you?"

Before Jess could reply a peculiar muffled sound drifted into the mine. It startled them, for it was like a cry of someone in distress.

"It must be Eben," Mrs. Hampton declared, as she rose quickly to her feet. "Let us go and find out what is the matter."

It did not take them long to grope their way to the entrance, for as they advanced they were guided by the light from the opening. Smoke was hovering about the mouth of the mine, and the air felt somewhat cool.

"It is raining!" Jess exclaimed. "The fire is all out." Then she gave a cry of fright as Eben's body, huddled upon the ground, met her eyes. Mrs. Hampton had seen it, too, and was first by the boy's side.

"Is he dead?" Jess asked in an awed voice.

"No, he is alive," Mrs. Hampton replied as she felt his pulse. "But look at his face! Isn't it terribly burned!"

"And his hands, arms, and body!" Jess replied. "Oh, the poor boy!" She dropped upon her knees by his side, and took one of the swollen hands in hers. "He must have been burned when he leaped through the fire at the landing," she continued. "And he must have been suffering all the time while he was rowing us here, and we were too much excited to notice it. Now I understand the meaning of that groan in the mine. Oh, what are we to do?"

"I am afraid we can do nothing," Mrs. Hampton replied. "The fire has destroyed the boat, so we cannot cross the lake. The only thing to do is to leave you here with Eben while I go for assistance."

"Perhaps John will soon be here," Jess suggested. "He must be very anxious about us."

"But he won't know where to find us."

"He will come to the island, anyway, and will search everywhere for us. Perhaps we shall be able to see him and call to him. Suppose we wait for a while. You cannot walk to the river."

"I can do more than you imagine," was the quiet reply. "But it is just as well to wait awhile. In the meantime we must get this poor boy under shelter. Let us carry him into the mine."

As carefully and tenderly as possible the two lifted the unconscious lad and bore him into the opening of the mine, where they laid him down upon the ground. With his head on her lap, Jess wiped away the moisture from the red swollen face. Tears streamed down her cheeks as she watched him, and noted how his hair had been burnt away, and his features distorted with pain.

"You poor boy!" she murmured. "You did it all for us, and we can do nothing for you now."

"We must do something," Mrs. Hampton declared. "I cannot wait here and let the boy die without making an effort to save his life. I can go to the other side of the lake, anyway, and be at the landing when anyone comes. John will surely be there soon. I hope nothing has happened to him."

At these words an expression of fear appeared in the girl's eyes as she turned them upon her mother's face.

"Perhaps he tried to reach us and was caught by the fire!" Her heart beat fast, and her face became very white.

"You need not worry, dear," Mrs. Hampton comforted. "John has common sense, and would not run any useless risk."

"But he would run any risk for us, I am certain," Jess declared. "He would not think of himself when

he knew that we were in danger. He would go through anything for us."

"I know that, dear," and Mrs. Hampton looked lovingly into the girl's sparkling eyes. "But perhaps he did not know of the fire in time. Most likely he was very busy about the place, and had little idea that we were in danger. I shall go now, for there is no time to lose. You watch by the poor boy. I don't like to leave you alone, but there is nothing else to do. I could not think of sending you, for you would be sure to lose your way."

Hardly had Mrs. Hampton ceased speaking ere Jess pointed excitedly across to the island.

"Look, look!" she cried. "Somebody is over there. He's standing on the shore, though he doesn't see us. I believe it's John!"

Laying Eben's head gently upon the ground, she sprang to her feet, hurried down to the edge of the lake, and called across the water. As she did so, the man on the island started, hurried forward, and looked over to where the girl was standing.

"Are you both safe?" he shouted.

"Yes," Jess called back. "But we want help."

"All right, I'll be there in a minute."

The next instant he was into the lake, and headed straight for the island. Jess watched him with the keenest interest, her eyes aglow with admiration.

"Isn't he a great swimmer!" she exclaimed, as she turned to Mrs. Hampton, who was now standing by her side. "I know he would come, didn't you?"

"Yes, if he possibly could," was the reply. "I am so thankful he is here, for he will be able to help us get that poor boy home."

It took John but a few minutes to swim across that narrow portion of the lake, and when his feet at length touched bottom he waded ashore, the water running in

streams from his body. But the women thought nothing of his personal appearance, so delighted were they to have him with them.

"Mother! Jess!" he panted. "How did you get here?"

In reply, Mrs. Hampton pointed to the partly-burned boat, and then turned toward the mine.

"Come," she simply said, "I want to show you something."

She led the way, with Jess and John following. The latter could not keep his eyes off the girl's face. He could hardly believe it possible that she was alive, and looking as beautiful as ever, although somewhat pale. He was like a man who had awakened from a horrible dream, and found that it was not true.

Mrs. Hampton stopped at the entrance of the mine and silently motioned to the prostrate boy.

"Why, it's Eben Tobin!" John almost shouted the words, so great was his surprise. "How in the world did he get here?"

"He came in the boat, and saved us just in the nick of time," Mrs. Hampton explained. "But for him we would not be here now."

"But what is wrong with him?"

"He is so terribly burned that he is unconscious. He leaped right through the fire at the landing, pushed off the boat, and came to our rescue. We were so excited that we did not know he was so badly burned until a short time ago. He never said a word to us about it. But we must get him home at once. How can we do it?"

John dropped upon his knees by Eben's side and examined his burns. He could tell at once how serious they were, and that something must be done immediately. And as he knelt there, the boy moaned and his body trembled. Then his eyes opened, his lips

moved, and he muttered words which the anxious watchers could not understand.

"We must get him home before he recovers consciousness," John declared, springing to his feet. "He does not realise his sufferings in his present condition. But should he come to out here it will be fearful, for we can do nothing to relieve his pain."

He turned and looked toward the remains of the boat, and then off into the forest.

"You stay here out of the rain," he told the women. "I want to see what can be done. I must build a raft of some kind to take us across to the landing, as it is impossible to carry Eben around the lake."

"Oh, let me help you," Jess pleaded. "Make some use of me."

"But you will get soaked, and your clothes and hands dirty," John replied.

"That won't matter. I don't mind the rain, and I can wash my hands and clothes."

"Very well, then," John assented, much pleased at the true spirit of the one he loved, and also anxious to have her with him.

In a few minutes they were down by the lake examining the boat, to find out how much it had been damaged.

"It is not so badly burned as I thought," John remarked. "The bottom is all right, and the sides are only partly injured. If we can get several good-sized poles to place underneath, it should carry us all right. I guess we can find them over there," and he motioned to his left. "If I only had an axe it wouldn't take me long to make a raft that would hold a horse."

Together they made their way into the forest a short distance from the mine. The fire had left desolation on all sides in its onward sweep. Everything was black, and the tall trees stood gaunt and bare. The underbrush had been burnt, so without much difficulty John was

enabled to find a number of sticks lying upon the ground, which he knew would serve his purpose. It did not take the two long to carry them back to the landing, and in a remarkably short time they were placed under the boat and securely fastened with willow withes, which served instead of a rope. When the work was finished, John stepped on the raft, pushed it from the shore, and tested it thoroughly.

"It is perfectly safe," he announced, "and will carry us all."

In a few minutes they were on board and out upon the lake, with Eben lying upon the bottom of the boat. John had found a long slim stick, and with this he poled. But when the water became too deep he paddled with one of the oars which had escaped the fire.

Little was said at first as they moved slowly forward toward the lower end of the island. Jess sat by Eben, with his head resting upon her lap, while Mrs. Hampton was seated near by. John was facing her, and at times their eyes met. Words were unnecessary to express their thoughts, for love has a silent language all its own, which lovers alone understand.

As they came near the lower end of the island, Jess pointed out the exact spot where she and Mrs. Hampton had taken refuge.

"It was on that big rock," she explained to John. "The fire was almost upon us when Eben arrived. We thought it was you at first, for we were expecting you, and wondering why you were so long in coming."

John made no immediate reply, but paddled steadily forward. He had said nothing about his experience on the plains, and he disliked to tell of it now. He was not sure how Jess might receive the news of her father's narrow escape and sad condition. He also knew that he would have to answer many questions, and would be forced to tell of his own part in the rescue, a thing

which was adverse to his nature. But he would have to do so sooner or later, so it might as well be now as any time, he thought. Then, as briefly as possible, he explained the cause of his delay, and how he had hurried to the island as soon as the men had arrived from the river.

While John was speaking, Jess watched him intently, her heart beating rapidly, and her face very pale.

"What was daddy doing there?" she asked when he had finished.

"He was looking for you, so I gathered from what he said. He became lost, and sprained or broke his ankle as he wandered around. Then the fire came, and he was stumbling across the plains when I happened to see him."

John said nothing about the manner in which Randall had treated him, and made light of his wild ravings after the fire had subsided. Perhaps his distraction was only temporary, he reasoned, so it was just as well not to give the girl any unnecessary worry.

Jess sat for a while lost in thought, and John was relieved that she did not ask any more questions.

"Poor daddy!" she sighed. "I am sorry for him, but I hope this experience of his will teach him a lesson. He has been needing it for some time."

"Are you not afraid to go back to the river?" John asked. "Perhaps your father will be more angry than ever, and blame you for his trouble."

"I am not afraid now," was the low reply. "All that daddy can do or say will make little difference to me after what I have undergone to-day. I am going to him as soon as I can, and have this whole matter settled. I am sure he will not want me to marry Donaster now after the cowardly way he ran away and left us to our fate. But even if he does, it won't matter to me. Perhaps I was foolish to run away as I did. It might have

been better if I had stayed at home, and asserted my rights. No one, not even my parents could have forced me to marry such a thing as that against my will. There will be no running away after this, I can tell you that. The matter will be settled once and for all as soon as I see daddy."

The decided tone of the girl's voice, and the look of determination in her eyes pleased the young man who was watching her. He liked what she said about Donaster, knowing that her censure was just. He knew what he would do with the coward should he ever catch him prowling around. He just longed for some pretext to get his hands upon the fellow.

As they drew near the landing, they saw a car come down to the shore and stop. Several men stepped out, who waved encouragingly to the voyagers. John recognised them at once as the ones who had come to his aid on the plains. He was very glad to see them, and thankful when at last the raft grounded upon the shore. Without any questions the men lifted Eben from the boat, and laid him gently in the auto.

"The women and you, John, can come with me," the driver announced. "There's another car outside for the rest of the men. We had a hard time getting through, so thought it best not to risk two cars."

In another minute they were on their way. Jess rode in the front seat, while Mrs. Hampton and John sat behind, and supported the still unconscious lad.

CHAPTER XXIX

CONFESSION

IT was a beautiful afternoon as Henry Randall sat in a big easy chair under the shade of a large apple tree at the back of the Hampton house. He was very weak from the terrible experience through which he had passed almost two weeks before. He was slowly recovering, and his mind was now as clear as ever, for the cloud had lifted on the second day after the fire. His foot was still painful, and he could not yet bear to touch it to the ground. He liked this place at the rear of the house. It was quiet and hidden from all inquisitive eyes of passers-by on the main highway.

The fire around Island Lake, and the thrilling escape from death of Henry Randall and the two women had stirred the country for miles around. For days it was the principal topic of conversation in numerous homes, at the church door on Sunday, and other places where people were in the habit of congregating. Although John Hampton was accorded much commendation for saving the life of the lumber merchant on the blueberry plains, it was Eben Tobin who received the unstinted praise of all, in so nobly rescuing the women from the island. Every day anxious inquiries were made for the lad, and all were greatly pleased to learn of his steady improvement. The doctor, however, reported that it would be months before he could fully recover from his serious burns, and that his face and body would be scarred for the rest of his life.

The city newspapers made much of the affair, and the day after the fire contained special articles, with big headlines. The fact that Henry Randall, a leading citizen, was one of the chief actors, and that he was searching for his daughter who had taken refuge in the wilderness, created a sensation. It was the first knowledge that the public had that the girl was not drowned, and every scrap of information was seized upon with avidity. That it was a love-affair of no ordinary nature was quite apparent, and this added to the intense interest which prevailed. Great credit was given to John Hampton and Eben Tobin for their part in the rescue, although it was hinted that the former was in a large measure responsible for the trouble.

Henry Randall made no comment about these newspaper articles when he was able to read them. Had they appeared three weeks before he would have been very indignant, and would have angrily resented the intrusion into his family affairs. But he had changed greatly since then. His blustering, dominating manner had disappeared, and he would sit by the hour beneath the shade of the old tree, either gazing straight before him, or intently watching the birds, bees, and butterflies, which flitted and buzzed on all sides. He spoke but seldom, and seemed to take very little interest in the world of business of which he had but recently taken such an active part.

Whether this change was due to weakness Jess could not tell. That he did not once refer to her escapade and the trouble she had caused, surprised her not a little. She waited upon him faithfully, at first almost day and night, and he seemed pleased to have her by his side. But she feared lest when he recovered his former strength his old imperious manner would return. She longed for him to remain the quiet, gentle, unassertive man that he now was.

Not until the second week after the fire did Mrs. Randall visit her husband. She had wanted to come as soon as she learned of the accident, but owing to her nervous disposition the doctor ordered that she should stay at home. She would only be in the way, and her presence would be bad for the patient, so he explained. When finally she did come, she was very restless, and it was difficult to know what to do with her. She became hysterical when she saw her husband lying so still and white, and she furiously upbraided Jess for her rebellion, and the trouble she had brought upon the family. But after a few days she quieted down, took an interest in the family affairs, and seemed to enjoy being out in the open. She became greatly attached to Mrs. Hampton, whose calmness and gentleness of manner won her affection.

"I wish I were like you," she one day confided, as she watched Mrs. Hampton at her work.

"In what way?" was the smiling reply.

"Nothing seems to worry you in the least. No matter what happens, you remain perfectly unruffled. Now, I am altogether different."

"Perhaps I have my troubles, too," was the quiet response. "But I try to keep busy and not worry too much about them. Perhaps you have too much idle time on your hands."

"That may be so," and Mrs. Randall sighed. "You have a clear conscience, at any rate. But I, oh, you have no idea how I have sinned. I am sure that I can never be forgiven for what I have done. If you knew what I have done, you would spurn me as one unfit to stay in your house another minute."

"Does your husband know about it?" Mrs. Hampton asked. She understood quite well to what this woman was referring, and only with an effort did she maintain her composure, although her heart beat fast.

"No, he has no idea of what I have done," Mrs. Randall replied. "I dare not tell him. Oh, it is terrible to have to bear this burden alone!"

Glancing out of the window, Mrs. Hampton saw Randall beneath the tree. She knew that some day the truth would have to be told, and no time seemed as opportune as now. It could not be delayed much longer, she felt certain, and the sooner the revelation was made the better it would be.

"Your husband is all alone," she remarked, turning to her visitor. "Suppose we go and sit with him for a while. I have some sewing to do, and it will be much nicer out there than in the house."

Mr. Randall smiled as the women came and sat down by his side. He was pleased to see his wife looking better than she had for years. The city paper, which had arrived at noon, was lying unopened on a little table by his side which Jess had placed there to hold the books and cigars which she hoped he would use. She had left him to go with John and the hired man into the hay field. She was never happier than when out in the open, and John was always delighted to have her with him. Their hearts were full of love, and the world seemed filled with peace and joy on this beautiful summer afternoon.

As the two women sat under the shade of the tree and talked, Mr. Randall listened for a while in a somewhat absent-minded manner. At length he reached out his hand and took the newspaper from off the table. He read first the financial news which interested him most of all. Then he turned over the pages and glanced carelessly at the events of the day. The various accounts of political meetings, murders, and local incidents had little or no appeal to him, and he was about to lay the paper aside when something caught his eye, which arrested

his immediate attention, and caused an exclamation of surprise to escape his lips.

"What is it, Henry?" his wife asked. "Anything special?"

"I should say there is," was the emphatic reply. "Donaster has been arrested for forgery."

Mrs. Randall gave a startled cry, and leaned excitedly forward.

"Arrested!" she exclaimed. "How terrible!"

"Yes, it certainly is," Randall replied, as he rapidly scanned the article. "He is not the son of Lord Donaster, for there is no such person by that name. That fellow is an impostor, and his father is a shoemaker in the United States. His real name, so this paper says, is William Lukie, and the police have been on his tracks for some time for forging the names of several prominent business men. So that's the end of that rascal, and I'm not sorry."

Mr. Randall put down the paper, leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. Mrs. Hampton had let her sewing drop upon her lap, and her eyes were fixed full upon the invalid's face. She was thinking rapidly, and her heart beat fast, for she had made up her mind that the great revelation must be made at all cost.

"So your daughter, then, will no longer be troubled with that man," she remarked as casually as possible.

"Certainly not," Randall replied. "It has been a very narrow escape."

"And you wanted to force her to marry him last fall, did you not?"

"We did, we did, fools that we were."

"Then Jess was right in taking matters into her own hands."

"She really was; I see it now. That girl has a great deal of common sense."

"I suppose you will let her choose for herself after this?"

"The man she wishes to marry, do you mean? H'm, I guess she has chosen already, from every appearance. I'm satisfied, if you are. I certainly would like to have John as a son. He would be a great help to me in my business. I wish I could say the same about my own boys."

"And if they should marry, you would get another son, while I should get a daughter. It would be a satisfactory arrangement on both sides, would it not?"

"It certainly would. Nothing would please me better."

Randall was greatly surprised as Mrs. Hampton rose suddenly to her feet and stood before him. She was trembling violently, and she laid her hand upon the table for support.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "Are you sick?"

"No, no, I am not sick. But I want to tell you something—a confession. Listen. John is your own real son, and Jess is my daughter. There, now you know the truth."

A startled cry from Mrs. Randall followed this announcement, which caused Mrs. Hampton to wheel suddenly around. Mrs. Randall had sprung to her feet, and was standing before her.

"What did you say?" she demanded. "That John is our son? Is it true? Tell me, quick."

"Yes, it is true," Mrs. Hampton replied. "John is your son, and Jess is my daughter.

For an instant it seemed as if Mrs. Randall would fall to the ground, so overcome was she at this startling announcement. She stared at Mrs. Hampton as if she had not heard aright. Then she placed her hand to her forehead and sank upon the ground, while tears streamed down her cheeks.

Mr. Randall gazed at the two women in amazement. He looked first at one and then at the other.

"What is the meaning of all this?" he demanded. "John my son, and Jess your daughter! For God's sake, explain!"

With face as white as death, in a low voice, broken with emotion, Mrs. Hampton revealed to the astounded man the entire story of the exchange of the two babies in the hospital almost twenty years before. When she had finished she stood silently before Randall, waiting for his reply. What would his answer be? she asked herself. Never for an instant had he taken his eyes from her face as she related the pathetic story of motherly shame. Would he now scorn her and his wife, and spurn them from him as unworthy of the name of women?

Presently Randall gave a deep sigh, and turned to his wife.

"Is this story true, Helen?" he asked.

"It is true, Henry, true in every word," the woman moaned, lifting her tear-stained face to his. "But forgive us, for the love of heaven forgive us! We have sinned, but we have suffered. Oh, it has been terrible!"

So vehement was her emotion that she rose and stood once more before her husband by Mrs. Hampton's side. An intense silence reigned for a few seconds, and then Mr. Randall motioned them to sit down.

"You need not get so excited," he told them, as wearily they both sank down in their chairs. "I am amazed at what I have just heard, but I hope I am not brute enough to increase your agony. You both have committed a great sin, but you have suffered enough, so I gather, to atone for the past."

"And you forgive us?" his wife eagerly asked, looking at him with tear-dimmed eyes.

"Certainly I forgive you. What else should I do? But why did you not tell me about this before, Helen?"

"I was afraid, Henry. And you know you would have condemned me had I told you even a month ago."

"I believe you are right, Helen," was the quiet reply. "But I have changed a great deal since then. I have been at death's door, and see things in another light. And besides, I would not have known then where and who my son is. But I know now, so that makes all the difference."

In Mrs. Randall's eyes appeared an expression such as her husband had not seen there for many years. It thrilled him, and carried him back to the first happy year of their wedded life. Rising to her feet, she came swiftly toward him, knelt by his side, placed her arms about his neck and gave him a loving kiss. Tears were in her eyes, but they were tears of joy now, and her heart was happy.

Mrs. Hampton was about to steal quietly away and leave the two alone with their new-found joy, when the sound of voices coming toward them caused her to hesitate.

"They are coming!" she announced, "and we must tell them! What will they think?"

Across the field came the young lovers, talking and laughing in the gayest of spirits. Their faces were flushed with vigourous exercise, and every motion of their bodies betokened abounding health. Life was very sweet to them on this bright summer day as they advanced toward the silent group anxiously awaiting their coming beneath the spreading branches of the friendly old apple tree.

CHAPTER XXX

JOY AT EVENTIDE

IT was early that evening as Jess kissed her father and advised him to go to sleep at once.

"You are tired, daddy, after the excitement of the day, so you need a good long rest."

"I suppose I do," was the reply. "But it will be somewhat hard to get to sleep after the events of the afternoon. Isn't it wonderful, Jess, what a change has come over your mother? I never saw anything like it."

"A great burden has been lifted from her mind, that's the reason. And, daddy, you forgive me for what I did?"

"Certainly, dear, certainly. But I am not your father any longer, remember."

"Oh, yes you are," and the girl smiled. "Just behave as you have since your accident, and I wouldn't change you for any man I know."

"Be careful, be careful what you say, Jess. I am not altogether blind and deaf."

A rich flush overspread the girl's cheeks, and her eyes sparkled as she turned them upon her father's face. She understood the meaning of his words.

"I want you always as my father," she replied; "that is what I mean. But, there, you cannot get to sleep if I stay here and chatter."

"Where are you going, Jess?"

"Over to see how Eben is getting along."

"That is good. And you will tell him what we were talking about this afternoon, will you not? I hope he will agree to my plan."

"I believe he will, daddy, and I am so glad you are going to do something for him. He is a fine boy, and we owe him much for what he did at Island Lake."

Giving her father another kiss, Jess hurried downstairs and found John waiting for her upon the verandah. It was a beautiful evening, calm and mild. The western sky was aglow with the glory of departing day, and the shades of night were slowly stealing over the land. The two spoke but little as they walked slowly across the field toward the Tobin house. It was the first time they had been alone since they had heard the wonderful news that afternoon under the apple tree. They longed to speak about it, and yet a natural reserve restrained them. They both felt that the time had now arrived when the great question must be decided, and this thought affected their free and easy manner of the past. But they were happy in each other's company, so words were unnecessary.

They found Eben lying in an invalid's chair upon the verandah, with the captain sitting by his side. He was still very weak, and the marks of the burns were visible upon his face. He smiled as the visitors drew near and sat down upon the steps. His old jealousy and animosity toward John had disappeared.

"How are you feeling this evening?" Jess asked.

"Somewhat better, I guess," was the reply.

"He's a great deal better, Miss," the captain declared. "I'm merely judgin' by the way he eats, fer that's allus a sure sign with Eben of jist how he's feelin'."

The captain was in excellent spirits, for his foot was almost well, and he was hoping to be back upon the river in a few days. He was also greatly pleased at

what Eben had done at Island Lake, and the praise he had received, especially in the newspapers. In fact, the latter were almost worn out, so often had he read the articles, and shown them to every person who came to the house.

"Yes," he continued, "Eben's appetite's all right, an' I expect it'll be hard to keep him filled when we git back on the boat."

"I don't want to go back on the boat," Eben replied. "I'm sick of it."

"Ye'll have to git over yer sickness, then," the captain reminded. "I can't git along without ye, an' what is there fer ye to do if ye don't go on the boat?"

"Oh, I'll find something, dad. I'm not worryin' about that now."

"How would you like to study civil engineering?" Jess asked.

Eben looked at her with surprise, wondering whether he had heard aright. Then he smiled, somewhat wistfully.

"I mean it," Jess insisted. "Father is willing to send you to college, and pay all your expenses. Isn't it great?"

"Great!" Eben fairly shouted the word, weak though he was. "Send me to college to be a civil engineer! Say yer jist foolin', ain't ye?"

"Indeed I am not. Daddy is willing and ready to do all he can to help you, so there."

"But what am I to do?" the captain demanded. "If Eben goes to college, I'll be left alone on the 'Eb an' Flo.' Guess I might as well close up bizness, too."

"Oh, daddy will make that all right, Captain. We talked it over this afternoon, so if you agree to let Eben go to college, he will arrange with you about the boat. Daddy is very much interested in the scheme."

"H'm, it seems to me he's changed a great deal since

the night he was here askin' about you. He was like a roarin' lion then."

"He has changed, Captain, until I hardly know him. I believe it was his narrow escape from death which did it. He is so gentle now, and a real companion. I am so thankful! And you will agree to let Eben go, won't you?"

"Guess we'll have to see Martha an' Flo, Miss. They'll have the most to say. But mebbe they'll agree, fer they'd like to see the boy git on."

"Where do I come in on this?" Eben unexpectedly asked. "I'm goin' to college, no matter what anyone says. I'm old enough now to think fer myself, an' I'm goin' to."

"Tut, tut, Eben," his father chided. "Ye needn't git on yer high-horse. Sartinly yer goin' to college. Yer ma an' Flo'll agree. I'll jist go after 'em. They're doin' the chores. We might as well git this matter settled while you're here, Miss. It'll smooth things somewhat to have you present. You kin explain to Martha better'n I kin."

The captain stepped off the verandah, and limped around the corner of the house in the direction of the barn. No sooner had he disappeared than Eben leaned eagerly toward his visitors.

"Ye'll both fergive me, won't ye, fer throwin' that stone?" he whispered.

"At the quarry, you mean?" Jess asked.

"Yes, that, an' the stick on the shore. The devil got into me, I guess."

"Certainly I forgive you, Eben, for what you did to me, and I know John will do the same."

"Indeed I will," the latter agreed. "You have made up for all that many times over. You risked your life for my mother and Miss Randall. We can never repay you."

"I don't think I'd a done it but fer that stone, Miss. Ye see, I couldn't git it out of my mind, so I wanted to make up in some way fer the harm I did. That was my only chance."

"And were you really thinking of that when you came through the fire to save us?" Jess asked in surprise.

"Yes, Miss, I was. I'm awful sorry fer what I did. I was a big fool, all right."

Just then his father returned, so nothing more was said about the matter.

"They won't come," the captain announced. "They say they're not dressed to receive company, an' I guess they're right. Martha does sartinly git on queer togs when she looks after the barn an' the chickens. I wish to goodness, Miss, ye'd slip out an' surprise her. It'd be a fine joke."

"Oh, that wouldn't be fair," Jess laughingly replied. "I wouldn't like for anyone to do that to me. We can come again."

Having bidden the captain and his son good-night, the young couple strolled down through the field toward the shore. The darkness had now deepened, but before them flowed the river, touched with the last rich rosy tints of the departed sun.

"Isn't it beautiful!" Jess exclaimed, as she stopped and looked out upon the water. "This is a perfect ending of a perfect day."

"It has truly been a wonderful day," John replied, "but I am not sure yet about the perfect ending. That remains to be seen."

"In what way, John? Could anything be more perfect than this?"

"Come, and I will explain," was all the young man said, as once more they moved forward.

They passed along the path leading to Beech Cove,

and when near the shore, they sat down upon an old log which years before had been stranded upon the beach.

"This is where Eben threw the stick," Jess remarked, as she looked around. "He has changed a great deal since then. He was not one bit jealous of you to-night."

John laughed as he nervously tore off a splinter from the log and broke it into bits. "I had two rivals then, but now I have none. One has repented of his own free will, while the other will trouble you no longer. Are you glad?"

"I suppose I should be," the girl slowly replied.

"And it will not be necessary to run away from your father now, and work for your own living," John continued. "So that matter is settled."

"But I have no father now," was the low response. "You have taken my place, so if I don't work I shall have to depend upon my own mother for a living, and I could not think of doing that."

"But you will have plenty, Jess. Your father, I mean my father. Dear me, I am all mixed up. Suppose I say, 'Our father'? Anyway, he wants me to go to the city, and help him in his business, which he says is too much for him to manage alone. He told me this afternoon that he would do what he could for the developing of the mine, and feels quite sure that he will succeed. Now, if we change places everything will be terribly mixed up. There is only one way out of it, Jess, and you know what that is. You must be my wife. It is you I want more than anything else in the world. I asked you once before, and you told me to wait. But now I can wait no longer. Oh, Jess, tell me that you love me, and will be my wife."

For a few seconds an intense silence reigned. Then the girl, her eyes misty with tears, turned her face to her lover's, and laid her hand in his.

"Take me, John," she simply said. "I am yours."

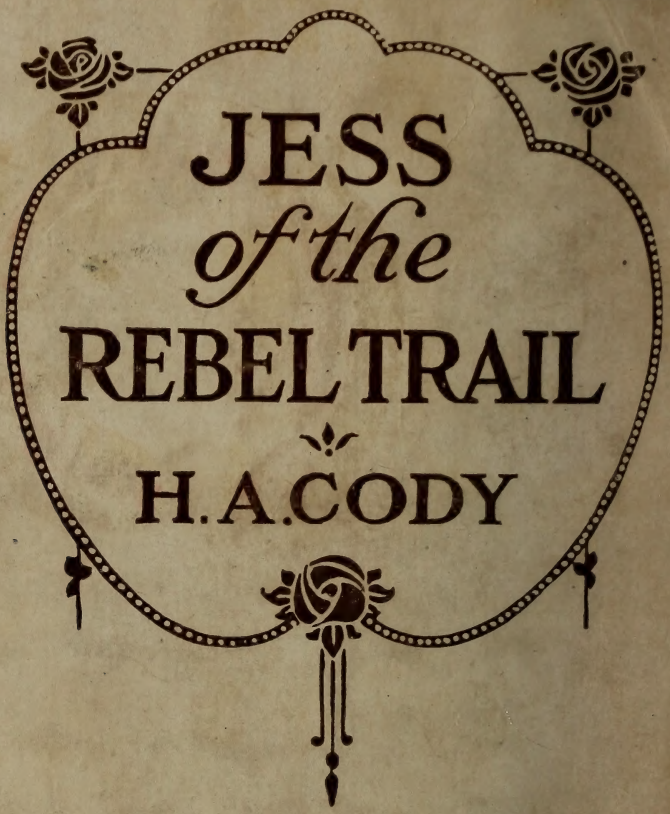
With his face radiant with joy, John enfolded her in his arms, and pressed his lips to hers.

"I agree with you now," he whispered, "that this is a perfect ending of a perfect day."

"And the beginning of many perfect days, let us hope," was the girl's low, happy reply.

THE END

By the Author of "Glen of the High North," "The Tou of Abner," "The Frontiersman," etc.



¶ Captain Tobin was on his knees scrubbing down the decks of the "Eb and Flo" when someone tripped over his feet and collapsed on top of him. As soon as he could free himself from the soft arms that clutched him round the throat he twisted his head round to find himself staring into the large frightened eyes of a girl, a lithe young girl who picked herself up with dignity and said firmly, "You have to hide me on your boat. I'm running away."

¶ It was so that Jess started on her rebel trail, a trail that led back to a secret covered by the dust of twenty years, and forward to a certain man with whom the past had linked her.

McCLELLAND & STEWART : *Publishers* : Toron